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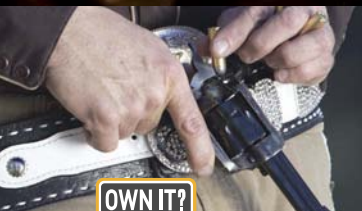


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ON THE COVER:

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JANTZ

THE SUPPLIES YOU NEED
FOR THE KNIFE YOU WANT

PATTERN 31

Pattern 31 Blades

Overall Length: 7 5/8"

Blade Length: 3"

Width: 1 1/8"

Thickness: 5/32"

CAT.#	STEEL	FINISH	PRICE
J3198	1095	Satin	24.95
J319K	1095	Black Teflon	24.95
J3127	D2 Steel	Peened	31.95
J3128	D2 Steel	Satin	31.95
J3147	154CM	Peened	35.95
J3148	154CM	Satin	35.95
J3189	Damascus	Random	99.95

#31 Bolsters

CAT.#	THICK	ALLOY	PRICE
K311	3/16"	Brass	6.95
K316	3/16"	Stainless	6.95
K313	1/4"	Brass	6.95
K314	1/4"	Stainless	6.95

#31 Fasteners

CAT.#	TYPE	ALLOY	QTY/SIZE	PRICE
B451	Torx	Brass	Two/1/4"	3.95
A461	Torx	Stainless	Two/1/4"	4.95
B660	Corby	Brass	Two/1/4"	3.49
A624	Corby	Stainless	Two/1/4"	3.49

Pattern 61 Blades

Overall Length: 7 3/4"

Blade Length: 3 1/4"

Width: 1 1/4"

Thickness: 9/64"

CAT.#	STEEL	FINISH	PRICE
J6127	D2 Steel	Peened	32.95
J6128	D2 Steel	Satin	32.95
J6107	440C	Peened	32.95
J6108	440C	Satin	32.95
J6157	CPM154	Peened	44.95
J6158	CPM154	Satin	44.95
J6189	Damascus	Random	89.95

#61 Bolsters

CAT.#	THICK	ALLOY	PRICE
K613	3/16"	Brass	6.95
K614	3/16"	Stainless	6.95

#61 Fasteners

CAT.#	TYPE	ALLOY	QTY/SIZE	PRICE
B052	Torx	Brass	Two/1/4"	3.95
A062	Torx	Stainless	Two/1/4"	4.95
B760	Corby	Brass	Two/1/4"	2.90
A724	Corby	Stainless	Two/1/4"	3.70
B326	Pins	Brass	Six/3/32"	1.99
A346	Pins	Stainless	Six/3/32"	1.99

PATTERN 61

Pre-Shaped Handles, Bolsters and Custom Components
available for these Pattern Blades at knifemaking.com

PATTERN 42

Pattern 42 Blades

Overall Length: 6 5/8"

Blade Length: 2 5/8"

Width: 7/8"

Thickness: 1/8"

CAT.#	STEEL	FINISH	PRICE
J4298	1095	Satin	24.95
J429K	1095	Black Teflon	24.95
J4227	D2 Steel	Peened	32.95
J4228	D2 Steel	Satin	32.95
J4207	440C	Peened	32.95
J4208	440C	Satin	32.95
J4257	CPM154	Peened	39.95
J4258	CPM154	Satin	39.95
J4289	Damascus	Random	69.95

550lb Paracord 100ft

CAT.#	COLOR	PRICE
PC114	Teal	6.99
PC115	Dark Brown	6.99
PC102	Black	6.99
PC103	Olive Drab	6.99
PC104	Coyote Brown	6.99
PC108	Burgundy	6.99

Kydex Sheath

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
KT420	Kydex Sheath	12.95

PATTERN 41 Blades

Overall Length: 7 5/8"

Blade Length: 3"

Width: 1"

Thickness: 1/8"

CAT.#	STEEL	FINISH	PRICE
J4198	1095	Satin	24.95
J419K	1095	Black Teflon	24.95
J4127	D2 Steel	Peened	32.95
J4128	D2 Steel	Satin	32.95
J4137	CPMS 30V	Peened	42.95
J4138	CPMS 30V	Satin	42.95
J4189	Damascus	Random	79.95

550lb Paracord 100ft

CAT.#	COLOR	PRICE
PC118	Neon Orange	6.99
PC122	Gold	6.99
PC109	Midnight	6.99
PC113	Dark Green	6.99
PC127	Desert Camo	6.99
PC128	Foliage Green	6.99
PC140	GI Camo	6.99
PC134	Stars & Stripes	6.99

Kydex Sheath

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
KT410	Kydex Sheath	12.95

PATTERN 41

DEC 2014 • VOLUME 55 • NUMBER 12



The exterior of the ATK Manufacturing facility in Manhattan, Montana.

Good Neighbor Policy

Craig Hodgkins

I don't want to come off like Johnny One-Note, but every time I head out on a working trip or plant tour, I return home more impressed with the companies I am blessed enough to deal with in the firearms and outdoor industries.

Case in point. I was recently in Montana (I know, I know) testing tactical gear and accessories as part of a group of writers and editors. As always, the group dynamic was tremendous (you never want for entertainment when you're surrounded by gun writers), and the individualized handgun training we received from action shooting champion Todd Jarrett was literally priceless.

But for me, one of the most impressive segments of the trip came when we toured the BLACKHAWK! facility in Manhattan, located about 20 miles from Bozeman in the southern part of the state.

It wasn't just the clean, orderly operation or the high quality of the dozens and dozens of products regularly making their way from raw materials to packaged goods.

It was the fact that the facility provides jobs to more than 200 people.

Now, a company with that many employees in Manhattan, New York, is one thing, but to provide employment to 200 citizens in a town of roughly 1,500 is something entirely different. Obviously, more than a few employees drive in from other towns, but if you know rural Montana, there aren't that many other towns to drive in from.

But BLACKHAWK! has proven to be a good neighbor in other ways. Right after the facility opened, the area was hit by heavy rains, which led to severe flooding. After ensuring that the facility was safe, management assembled a team of employee volunteers to go out into the community to assess needs. Using a variety of means, including water pumps and sand bags, these teams cleared drains, rerouted water flow, and continued to perform cleanup for more than a week after the storm had moved on ... all on their own time.

A grateful community presented the team with a large framed portrait of an American eagle with an inspirational quote. It now hangs in the lobby of the facility, an impressive reminder of a good neighbor policy. **GW**

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Rock Steady



This bench mount scope stand, available from Sinclair International and Brownells, keeps your line of sight rock solid, even in windy Texas.

Question: I'm having trouble with wind at the shooting range making my tripod-mounted spotting scope jiggle, and it's hard to see where I'm hitting the targets. What's the best way to keep the spotting scope steady?

Joey C., San Marcos, TX

Mike Dickerson answers:

High-powered optics are useless if they're shaking so badly that you can't see holes in paper or count the points on a distant elk. I

don't like tripods at the bench because they take up a lot of room and are prone to wind jiggle.

The best solution I've found is the bench mount scope stand from Sinclair International and Brownells. It clamps securely to benches up to 12 inches thick, and has a single, stainless steel shaft that the head rides up and down on for proper scope positioning. Once you lock it on target, a small knob lets you make fine vertical adjustments. I mount it to the left side of the bench so I need only to lean over to use the scope. This is a rock-

solid setup, and I suspect it would remain steady in everything short of a hurricane.

In the field, carbon-fiber tripods are the way to go because they're lightweight, but like all tripods, they're susceptible to wind jiggle. Set up out of the wind, if possible, and extend the legs only as high as you really need to. Use a tripod with a hook beneath the head to suspend extra weight from. This could be a water bladder, or a small laundry bag or sock filled with rocks. You'll find that any added weight will help steady the scope. **GW**

Our December Expert:

Mike Dickerson hunts extensively across North America and has published hundreds of articles on hunting, rifles, handguns, shotguns, ammo and concealed carry. His feature on the Diamondback 9mm can be found on page 44.

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The *HIT Sling*

Text & Photos by Tim Stetzer

Advanced Gunslinger Armament Brings Functional Flexibility To Your Black Rifle Or AR Pistol

If you're looking for a tactical sling for your black rifle, the choices available today can be a little overwhelming. There are a lot of great models out there, but finding the one that's best for you can be a challenge. Luckily for me, I received a recommendation from a couple of my department's SWAT guys to check out the HIT sling from Advanced Gunslinger Armament (AGA).

AGA is a veteran-owned small

business and it makes everything here in the U.S. The HIT sling—or Hybrid Instant Transition sling—was designed by a U.S. Navy SEAL and was field-tested on real world missions.

The HIT starts out as a fairly traditional single point sling and offers all of the flexibility of that style for rapid transition to either shoulder, the ability to let the weapon drop for weapon transition or to flip the weapon back up over

your shoulder if you need to go hands on such as in a law enforcement scenario.

Where it differs from most other slings is that it also allows you to transition the sling into a two-point configuration so it is swinging around during periods of inactivity, while patrolling or standing a post. A quick-release buckle also lets you snug the weapon up close to your chest. That way it isn't swinging around if you need to navigate obstacles or to have it out of the way while you perform other tasks. A single pull tab pulls the rifle up and also rapidly releases tension so that you can go right back into



◀ The HIT sling can be configured as a two-point sling, but allows for almost instantaneous transition back to a one-point sling when needed.



▼ A quick pull on the RED swivel knob releases the HIT sling from its two-point configuration and transitions it back to a single-point sling.



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The "Tank" Scope Plumb



▲ By loosening the tension on the adjustment buckle, you can quickly deploy the rifle in two-point mode. A simple tug of the RED swivel knob transitions you back to a single-point sling.

using the rifle in the two-point configuration again.

Where the HIT sling shines though, is in its ability to instantly transition back to a single-point

sling. By using a quick-release coupler—which AGA calls the RED swivel—mounted on a short piece of fore end rail, you can transition back to a single-point sling with a

fast pull of the RED knob. It's a much faster process than any clip-style connector on the market. With a little practice, it can be done as part of the motion of bringing the weapon up to the shoulder.

I had a chance to work with a hybrid model HIT sling in conjunction with a CMMG MK P pistol I was testing and found it worked extremely well for that set up. The CMMG is about the same size as the Colt Commandos that our SWAT team uses, although the HIT sling works equally well with full-sized M4s and rifles, too. It's a comfortable sling to wear and easy to use, which is key during any sort of dynamic shooting scenario, be it real life or competition. **GW**



▲ The RED swivel requires a short piece of fore end rail and a rail-mounted swivel socket. If you don't already have these, a couple of models are available from AGA when you order your sling.

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The striker-fired SIG P320 is an ultra-modern service pistol that offers the latest in firearms technology for law enforcement and personal defense.



Sweet *SIG Sauer*

Text & Photos by
Dr. Martin D. Topper

The P320 is a striker-fired, polymer-framed high-capacity semi-auto that shoots straight and runs flawlessly.

For SIG Sauer fans, the wait is over. The P320 has arrived.

The version I received at the Florida Gun Exchange was the full-size model with the medium grip frame. This pistol is not stripped down; it's fully equipped with many desirable features.

Photo by Terrill Hoffman



SPECIFICATIONS

SIG P320

Barrel: 4.7 inches

Frame: Stainless steel

Stocks: Molded polymer grip frame

Finish: Nitron matte black slide, black polymer grip frame

Length: 8.0 inches

Weight: 29.4 ounces

Caliber: 9 mm parabellum

Capacity: 18 rounds, 17 in magazine

Sights: SigLite night sights

MSRP: \$669 - \$713

These include SIG's proprietary Nitron weather-resistant coating on the slide and SigLite night sights with white-outline, green tritium lamps. The rear sight has a square front and can be used as a cocking ledge for emergency operation by an injured officer or civilian who has been trained in disabled shooting. The front sight is also ramped, so it won't hang up on clothing when the pistol is drawn. In addition, the slide has a large, flared ejection port and beveled external extractor for reliable ejection. In keeping with its tactical mission, the P320's finish is an even matte black.

The frame of the gun is similar to the stainless steel drop-in box frame developed for the SIG P250. This rectangular steel box contains the fire control system, the slide lock and the frame rails. The steel frame fits into a matte black poly-

mer grip frame. The grip frame is stippled for a firm handhold and its dust cover has an M1913 Picatinny rail where various lights, lasers and light/laser combinations can be attached. There are several grip frames available, and the owner can change from a full-size to a smaller carry-size grip frame by simply transferring the steel frame from one grip frame to another. The steel frame is the legal "gun," and one does not need to undergo additional background checks when changing grip frames.

The P320 has a few other features that allow the pistol to be adapted to its users' needs. Law enforcement agencies that desire triggers with a safety tab in the trigger face can order a tabbed trigger, they can also order the pistol with an external manual "thumb" safety. In addition, left-handed shooters

can move the magazine release from the left side of the frame to the right side. And, since the pistol has slide lock levers on both sides of the frame, right- or left-handed shooters can easily operate the P320.

In the near future, caliber conversion kits will also be available for the P320. Changing calibers will be possible in about a minute by simply switching barrels, slides and magazines. At present the P320 is available in 9mm., .40 S&W and .357 Sig. A version in .45 ACP will be offered later this year.

Photo by Terrill Hoffman



▲ The striker-fired Sig P320 is easily identified because it lacks the external hammer found on other Sig duty pistols.

■ EXAMINATION

Before taking it to the range, the P320 was thoroughly cleaned, appropriately lubed and examined for any possible defects. Fieldstripping is much easier than with many other striker-fired polymer-framed pistols. One does not have to pull the trigger or decock the trigger mechanism before the gun is stripped. One simply removes the magazine, locks the slide back to check that the chamber is empty and then rotates the takedown lever on the left side of the grip frame into the "down" position.

From that point, the user holds the slide firmly back, releases the slide lock and then slowly allows the slide to move forward off of the grip frame. Once the slide and frame are separated, the recoil spring and guide rod can be removed and the barrel can be lifted out of the slide. Reassembly is done in reverse order. SIG recommends that TW-25B synthetic grease be used to lubricate its pistols, so after

cleaning the bore, I placed a small amount of this product on the frame rails and lightly coated the exterior of the barrel before re-assembling the gun.

Close examination of the interior and exterior of the gun showed zero defects. The finish was evenly applied. All parts were properly formed and there were no tool marks on metal surfaces or mold marks on the polymer grip frame. The gun came with the "medium" version of the full-size grip frame. It fit me perfectly and placed the pad of my right index finger squarely on the trigger. Trigger pull was measured with an RCBS trigger pull gauge and averaged 7 pounds with a range of 6.8 to 7.2 pounds. Trigger reset was short and fast.

■ SHOTS FIRED

The P320 was put through a number of live-fire tests to test the pistol's accuracy, velocity and shootability. Five factory loads were provided by their manufacturers.



Photo by Terrill Hoffman

▲ The P320 magazine offers a 17-round capacity.



▲ The P320 shot bench rest groups that averaged 2.5 to 3.5 inches at 15 yards.

TEST PERFORMANCE

LOAD NAME	VELOCITY	MUZZLE ENERGY	AVG. 15-YD. GROUP
Black Hills 124-gr. +P XTP	1,243 fps	395 ft-lbs	3.56 inches
Corbon 90 gr.	1,387 fps	384 ft-lbs	2.52 inches
Federal 147-gr. Hydra-Shok	859 fps	241 ft-lbs	3.38 inches
Liberty Civil Defense 50-gr. Copper HP	1,973 fps	432 ft-lbs	3.64 inches
Winchester 147-gr. Train FMJ	857 fps	240 ft-lbs	2.72 inches

Five-shot groups fired at 15 yards from an MTM Front Sight rifle rest. Velocity was the average of five shots measured 15 feet from the muzzle with a PACT 1XP chronograph.

They included Black Hills' 124-gr. +P XTP HP, Corbon's 90-gr. +P JHP, Federal's 147-gr. Hydra-Shok, Winchester's 147-gr. Train FMJ and Wolf's 115-gr. JHP. All functioned perfectly in the P320.

Accuracy tests were performed at a local private range. An MTM Front Sight rifle rest was used to rest the pistol and a Leupold Kenai Spotting scope was used to check hits. Since the P320 is primarily designed to be a personal defense gun with fixed sights, the distance to the target was set at 15 yards.

Overall accuracy was quite acceptable for a handgun designed for personal defense. Average groups ranged between 2.62 and 3.86 inches. The best individual group was fired with Corbon's 90-gr. +P JHP. It measured 1.51 inches. The Corbon load also had the second best overall average group size.

Velocity was measured using a PACT 1XP chronograph placed 15 feet from the muzzle. Velocities for all five loads were at or very near their factory-published specifications. The Corbon load had the highest velocity. It left the muzzle at an average velocity of 1,477 fps and generated an average of 436 ft-lbs of muzzle energy, giving it the highest energy of any load tested in this pistol.

The lowest velocity load was Federal's 147-gr. Hydra-Shok, which registered an average velocity of 967 fps and generated an average of 305 ft-lbs of muzzle energy. This was the least amount of energy for any of the ammunition tested. Even so, this 9 mm load still has about 30 to 40 percent more muzzle energy than most .38 Spl. +P loads fired from a 4-inch barrel.

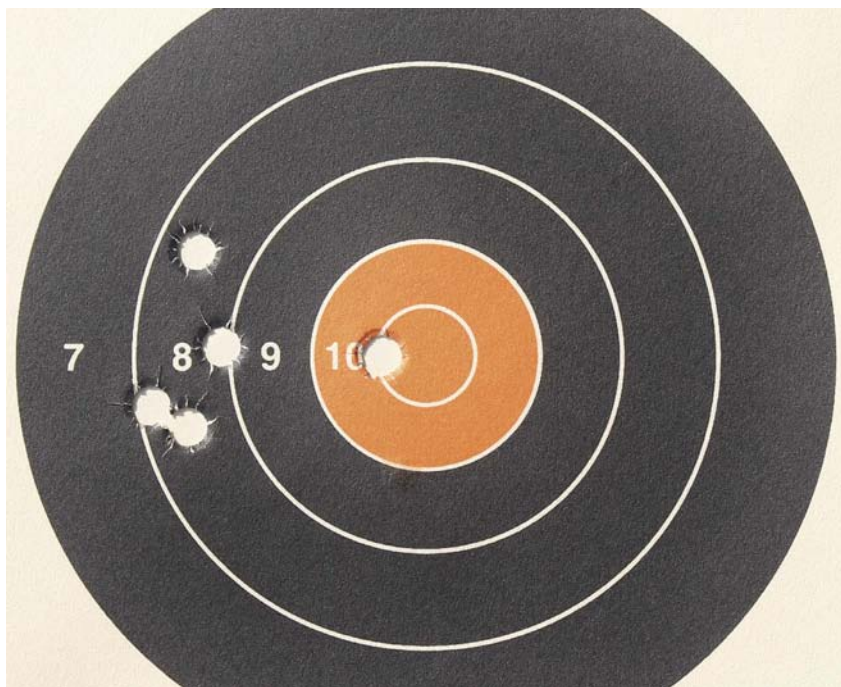
SHOOTABILITY

A pistol can look nice and perform well at the bench, but the ultimate test of a gun and its ammunition is how well they perform together in a variety of live-fire exercises. In order to test the shootability of the P320, I shot it at a Flagler Gun Club Informal Bulls-eye Match, shot steel plates, and also put it through a multi-target tactical drill at the Volusia County Gun and Hunt Club.

“This pistol points naturally and has the firepower to deliver 18 shots quickly and accurately.”



▲ The 7-pound pull rapid reset of the P320's trigger allowed the author to easily neutralize these targets during a tactical drill.



▲ This 1.51-inch group shot at 15 yards with Corbon's 90-gr. +P JHP demonstrates the inherent accuracy of SIG's new striker-fired pistol.

The P320 is clearly not a bull's-eye gun, but my scores on the timed fire stage clearly indicated how consistently the P320 could be fired under the pressure of competition. On the first string, my score was 89-1X and on the second it was 91-2X. This was more than adequate for personal defense or law enforcement purposes.

Shooting falling plates confirmed the results from the Bullseye match. Firing from a distance of 15 yards, six plates set side-by-side fell fast, thanks to the 320's white dot sights, smooth 7-pound trigger and quick trigger reset. The next drill involved the plate tree. The dueling post is a vertical array of six plates. When a plate is squarely hit, it swings to the other side of the tree. With one shooter, the goal of the exercise is to see how quickly you can move all plates from one side of the tree to the other. The 320 again did quite well.

The final exercise was a multi-

ple target drill from 5 yards. It involved moving one step to the side while drawing and shooting three targets set on two target stands. The first target represented a single-armed attacker and the second one depicted two assailants, one standing in front of the other.

The first target was neutralized with a chest shot, the second with one head or chest shot and the third target required a head shot. There was no limitation on the number of shots that could be taken at the head or chest of the targets. All shots were fired as fast as possible and all landed in either the 5 zone or the 10 zone.

■ FINAL THOUGHTS

The SIG P320 proved to be a highly reliable and an accurate duty/personal defense handgun. This pistol points naturally and has the firepower to deliver 18 shots quickly and accurately before the user needs to reload. With perform-

ance this good, the P320 is likely to be well received by SIG fans and by the general public as well. **GW**

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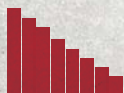
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Although the UTS-15 may have a Star Wars look, it is well designed for ergonomics and functionality. Note, this is the Maritime model, so the plated parts and blue camo finish are appropriate.

Shipshape *Shotgun*

Text & Photos by Leroy Thompson

The UTS-15: A High Capacity Bullpup Tactical Shotgun



For decades, shotgun designers have sought to increase smooth-bore cartridge capacity, often using some sort of tradeoff. Longer magazine tubes added space for a couple of rounds, while detachable box magazines added rounds at the expense of magazine length and weapon handiness. Drums and tubular magazines that can be switched out quickly have also been tried with various levels of success.

A good view of the UTS-15's breaching choke and integrally mounted green laser.



Currently, the most effective method for increasing shotgun capacity seems to be the use of multiple feed tubes, and one of the most interesting shotguns to use this method is the UTS-15, a joint U.S./Turkey product designed by Ted Hatfield. The "U" represents the U.S.A., the "T" comes from Turkey, and the "S" from shotgun. The "15" designates the cartridge capacity.

■ A BULLPUP THAT ISN'T

Although many have dubbed the UTS-15 a "bullpup," (including me), a bullpup rifle has its action and magazine behind the trigger group. Since the UTS-15 is a pump action and the feed tubes are in

front of the trigger group, by definition it is not a bullpup. Having said that, it greatly resembles one. This type of long gun normally has a shorter length of pull, which is not a problem when one gets used to it and which more readily adapts to wearing body armor.

Certainly, its appearance recalls some of the weapons seen in Star Wars, and that was especially so with the blue camouflage on the Marine Model I tested. In short, it doesn't look like a traditional combat shotgun, and it doesn't handle like one. However, as I have found with other bullpup-type designs, it handles much better than one would think from its appearance.



▲ As with the AR-15 series of rifles, the UTS-15 has a flip-up ejection port dust cover that will be pushed open as the action cycles.

On this type of design, a pistol grip is a necessity to allow it to be handled comfortably and effectively. It also aids retention, and allows it to be kept ready for use in one hand while leaving the other hand free for other tasks. Of course, since it's a pump action, the support hand must be back on the forearm when actually shooting.

Barrel length of the UTS-15 is 18.5 inches, and it is threaded for various screw-in chokes that use Beretta threads. A cylinder bore choke that fits flush with the barrel comes standard on the shotgun, but I installed the cylinder bore ported breeching choke that also came with the shotgun.

Optional iron sights are available with the UTS-15. A front post is adjustable for elevation and a rear flip-up ghost ring/V-notch is adjustable for windage. Since I use

ghost ring sights on a lot of my shotguns, I was quite happy with these sights. I would prefer that they were flip-up, as they stand up enough from the receiver that they could get banged around. They appear quite sturdy, but I still am used to folding BUIS and would like these to fold so I could use an optical sight with them if I so desired.

■ FEEDING THE UTS-15

The UTS-15's feed system is the key to its high magazine capacity, and, to an extent, to its handling characteristics. Above the barrel, two magazine tubes are located side-by-side and are loaded by opening an access door on each side of the receiver. Once it is open, the follower is pushed forward until it locks in the ready position. Seven shells may then be pushed against the follower one at a time to load

the tube. This process is repeated on both sides. After loading each tube, the access door is snapped shut, allowing a shell to be fed into its ready-to-load position.

Atop the receiver, a selector switch may be set to the left, right, or center. In the center position, shells will feed alternatively from each side. If pushed to the right or left, that tube is selected and all shells will feed from that tube. On the center setting, the user has 14 continuous shots when using 2 3/4-inch shells (15, if the weapon has one chambered).

When using 3-inch shells, capacity is 12+1. This offers the maximum firepower and also equalizes the shotgun's weight a little better. One of the two tubes may also be loaded with one type of shell and the other with another (e.g. buckshot and slugs). Although one side could be loaded with less lethal loads and the other with buckshot, generally, this would not occur due to the possibility of selecting the wrong load by accident.

When loading the first round, a slide release button on the bottom of the stock is depressed and the forearm is pulled smartly to rear, then thrust all the way forward to chamber a round. As a shell leaves the magazine, it drops into position aligned with the barrel, where a flat lever drops to align it as it enters the chamber. The safety lever on the left side above the trigger should have been put on "safe" first.

If full 15-round capacity is desired, the tube from which the shell fed can be topped off. Unless the UTS-15 is being shot on the range right away, I would recommend that the spring-loaded hinged dust cover be closed over the ejection



► A good view of the UTS-15's square and roomy trigger guard, which allows access even when wearing gloves; the black switch above the trigger guard controls the laser. Also visible are the loading gate and dust cover.



If there is a malfunction, the top of the butt stock may be popped up to allow access to the feed tubes and the feed lever. To safely clear the weapon, both access doors should be opened to check that the tubes are empty, then the bolt should be pumped to the rear and the chamber checked, and, finally, the stock should be popped up to check that there is not a round ready to feed.

Among other features of note are an optional light or laser mounted below the barrel, which is turned on or off by a lever on the right side in front of the trigger guard operated by the trigger finger. The version I tested had a green laser.

Although the UTS-15 is light and handy, bullpup-type guns can be hard to carry comfortably for extended periods. A sling may be attached to the UTS-15 using two sturdy left-side sling swivels mounted at the front of the receiver and the rear of the butt pad.

The receiver/stock of the UTS-15 is constructed of fiber-reinforced,

⦿ SPECIFICATIONS

UTS-15 Marine Model

Action: Pump

Caliber: 12 gauge, 2 ¾ or 3 inch

Overall Length: 28.3 inches, with standard flush mounted choke

Barrel Length: 18.5 inches

Weight: 6 pounds, 13 ounces

Cartridge Capacity: 15 rounds (14+1 with 2 ¾-inch shells); 13 rounds with 3-inch shells

Sights: Fixed or optical mounted on a Picatinny Rail

port. It will pop open as the action operates but keep dust out until then. Since the innards of the UTS-15 are a bit more complicated than the average pump shotgun, keeping dust out makes sense.



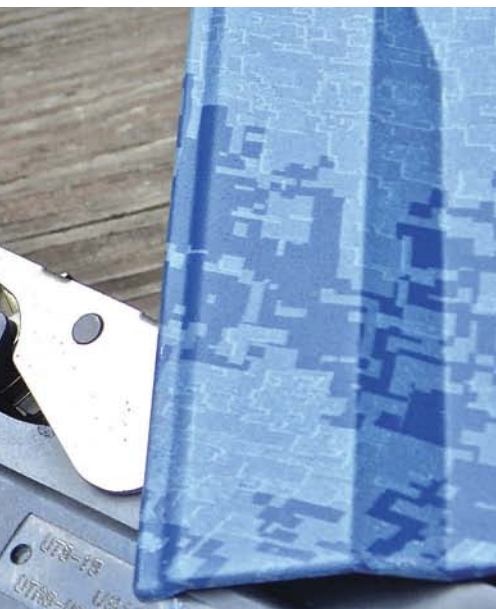
► Access to the magazine tubes and other internal parts may be gained by raising the top panel of the stock. This allows clearing of jammed cartridges. Note that the switch to determine feed is the middle allowing alternate feed from each tube.

injection-molded polymer for a combination of strength and lightness. The Marine Model that I tested has a blue camo finish, but versions with desert, OD, or black, among others, are available. On the Marine Model, metal parts are nickel plated for corrosion resistance.

■ LIVE FIRE TESTING

On my first test session, I took along boxes of Federal and Winchester Low Recoil 2 3/4 inch buckshot in both #4 and 00. On a later session, I took along Federal 3-inch loads, mostly #1 buckshot, and current GI overrun 2 3/4-inch 00 buckshot. Initially, I loaded 14 rounds, but did not top off to 15. I fired the first 14 at a couple of targets to test patterns, then shot at plates to test functioning when working the slide quickly.

As with any pump action shotgun, it is important to pull the slide action all the way to the rear, then thrust it all the



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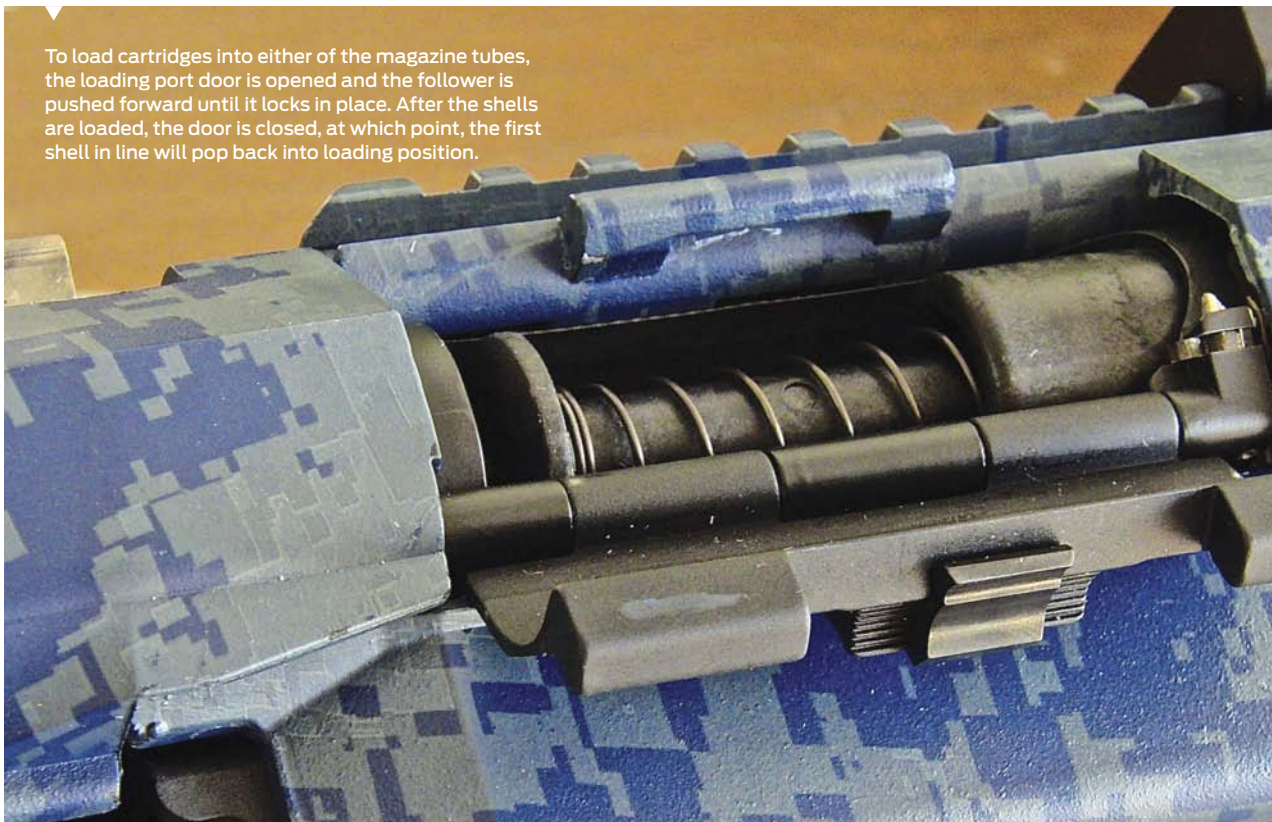
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To load cartridges into either of the magazine tubes, the loading port door is opened and the follower is pushed forward until it locks in place. After the shells are loaded, the door is closed, at which point, the first shell in line will pop back into loading position.



way forward, sharply. On that first run, I left the selector lever in the middle to feed from both sides. On the second run, I tried with the lever first on the right side, then the left side to feed from each tube by itself. Functioning was fine in all cases.

When I shot for patterns, I found that they were hitting low and left at 15 and 25 yards. I adjusted for windage and corrected the pattern to the right, but I did not at that point adjust the front post, as I want to shoot some more first. I since have adjusted elevation as well. Shooting at a Zombietarget.net walking dead man at 15 yards, I fired two rounds of 00 buckshot that would have cut him in half at the waist, but I was aiming at the chest. The pattern for both rounds together was about 8 inches.

At 25 yards, I fired two rounds of Federal #4 buckshot at a man



▲ The UTS-15's safety is of typical switch type and is easily operated with the thumb of the shooting hand. The textured pistol grip is comfortable and offers a very solid grip.

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As with many bullpup designs, the UTS-15 is actually very comfortable to shoot.

with a gun target. The pattern was higher at 25 yards but still not at point of aim and was still to the left. It covered 14 inches. Other than the fact that I needed to move the patterns to the right, they were good.

On my second trip to the range, I fired Winchester GI 2 3/4-inch 00 buckshot loads and Federal 3-inch #4 buckshot loads. I found to ensure reliability with 3-inch loads, it is important to pull the slide to the rear smartly to make sure the empty case ejects. With the 3-inch loads, recoil was noticeable and the stock smacked me in the chin a bit, but it was not an issue when firing only a few rounds.

On an Ops Gear Osombie target, I fired two rounds of the 3-inch loads, which did a good job of perforating the chest. I had adjusted windage and elevation while shooting the GI loads so this pattern, which measured 12.25 inches by 13.5 inches, was well centered.

Although it was more than 90

degrees when I was shooting the UTS-15, one thing I noticed was that the very roomy trigger guard would have allowed easy shooting while wearing gloves.

I think the UTS-15's high-speed look will appeal to some shooters, which is fine because it is also a good shotgun that is light and easy to handle. The stock is somewhat "one size fits all," but it was comfortable to shoot and I could move the rear sight forward or backward to get the proper eye relief. Recoil was very mild with the Federal and Winchester low-recoil loads, still mild with the GI 2 3/4-inch loads, and certainly not punishing with the 3-inch loads.

For shooters who might purchase the UTS-15 as a defensive shotgun, the black version would probably hold the most appeal. Since I see a niche for the "Maritime" model for boat security, I decided to test that version. List price of the UTS-15 is three times that of

some very useful defensive shotguns, so I doubt many will buy it for basic self-defense, but it can perform that mission.

It certainly would make a good Zombie Apocalypse shotgun, though, with its high-magazine capacity. In fact, UTAS also sells a version it designates as the "Zombie Model." It also offers a hunting model with magazine plugs to make it legal for turkeys or other game. Whatever reason one would choose to purchase a UTS-15, based on my testing the shotgun will perform well, and it will certainly gets lots of attention from your shooting buddies. **GW**

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Budget-Friendly Bolt-Action

Text & Photos by Dave Spaulding

Ruger's American Rifle In .223 Remington

The Ruger American Rifle is a top-quality, cost-effective long gun that will fill the requirements of a variety of shooters.



If you spend any time on the Internet gun forums, you have probably noted the high interest in “bug out” topics: what would you do, take, bring, store for an “end of days” scenario. I can’t help but think two things; one, there are a lot of people who are giving this serious thought. Two, I sure hope it never comes to this.



▲ The Champion low-profile bi-pod, like the American Rifle, is of high quality, while priced reasonably.

Some writing on these forums seem to almost relish the idea of bugging out and living on a parched earth—but I am not one of them. Still, having been thorough several natural disasters and seen how quickly “normal” can break down, having a plan, whether it’s to evacuate or stay in place with needed supplies, is sound advice and practice.

Part of a solid plan is to have a stockpile of food, water and essential gear that will get you and your loved ones through several weeks of hardship. Of course, a firearm would be essential gear and the debate over which would be best can get quite heated! Some want a high volume of firepower to repel hoarding masses—or zombies—while others feel simplicity is the way to go. Both sides make good and bad points. I would go for simplicity, as I would do my best to avoid situations where conflict with others (and a high volume of fire) is likely.

No matter how prepared or equipped one might be, any time you enter conflict, you run the risk of losing. It’s just the nature of the

beast. In such a scenario, avoidance and evasion would be key.

For this situation, I would prefer a bolt-action rifle to a semi-automatic. With fewer parts there is less to go wrong (and parts replacement issues) and the manual action of the bolt does not rely on spring tension to function. Admittedly, this could end up being the wrong choice if I do need to shoot fast.

Certainly the Remington 700, with its decades of combat use, would be a good choice, but a relative newcomer has caught my eye.

The Ruger American Rifle is best described as a top-of-the-line, bolt-action rifle at a budget level price of \$449 MSRP. The American is available in calibers .308, .30-06, 7mm-08, 270, 243, 22-250 and its most recent addition, .223 Remington, which is the gun I tested for this article.

Having shot the American in all of the listed calibers except 7mm-08, I can say the lightweight bolt gun can be a bit of a handful in the larger calibers. It’s not uncontrollable, mind you, but it is “noticeable” to shoot, so I was most



The Ruger logo on the bottom of the pistol grip is a nice touch.

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10/22 "Take Down"



Item #: 11100
Caliber: 22LR

- Capacity: **10+1**
BBL: **18.5"**
Sights: **Front: Gold Bead**
Rear: Folding Leaf
- Polished Stainless Steel Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Black Synthetic Stock
 - Detachable Rotary Magazine
 - Black Cordura Takedown Case



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Item #: 11125
Caliber: 22LR

- Capacity: **25+1**
BBL: **16.25" Threaded**
Sights: **Front: Red Fiber Optic**
Rr: Adj Green Fiber Optic
- Polished Stainless Steel Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Black Synthetic Stock
 - Mini-14 Style Flash Suppressor
 - Black Cordura Takedown Case



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EXCLUSIVE

10/22 "Take Down" NRA Special Edition



Item #: 11153
Caliber: 22LR

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donated to the NRA

- Capacity: **10+1**
BBL: **18.5"**
Sights: **Hi-Viz**
- Matte Blue Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Synthetic Natural Gear Camo Stock
 - NRA Logo On Bolt
 - Special Serial Numbers
 - Brown Cordura Takedown Case



10/22 Carbine with LaserMax Laser



Item #: 11129
Caliber: 22LR

- Capacity: **10+1**
BBL: **18.5"**
Sights: **Front: Gold Bead**
Rear: Folding Leaf
- Black Matte Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Black Synthetic Stock
 - Scope Base Adapter
 - Detachable Rotary Magazine



10/22 50th Anniversary Design Contest Rifle



Item #: 11173
Caliber: 22LR

- Capacity: **10+1**
BBL: **18.5" Threaded**
Sights: **Front: Non-Glare Post**
Rear: Ghost Ring Adjustable
- Stainless Steel Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Black Ruger Modular Stock System
 - 50th Anniversary Bolt & Receiver Markings
 - Scout Rifle Style Picatinny Rail
 - Mini-14 Style Flash Suppressor



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10/22 Carbine Davidson's Exclusive



Item #: 1109
Caliber: 22LR

- Capacity: **10+1**
BBL: **18.5"**
Sights: **Front: Gold Bead**
Rear: Folding Leaf
- Blue Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Black Laminate Stock
 - Scope Base Adapter
 - Detachable Rotary Magazine



DAVIDSON'S
EXCLUSIVE

10/22 Carbine Davidson's Exclusive



Item #: 1208
Caliber: 22LR

- Capacity: **10+1**
BBL: **18.5"**
Sights: **Front: Gold Bead**
Rear: Folding Leaf
- Blue Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Black & Purple Laminate Stock
 - Scope Base Adapter
 - Detachable Rotary Magazine



DAVIDSON'S
EXCLUSIVE

10/22 Carbine Davidson's Exclusive



Item #: 1209
Caliber: 22LR

- Capacity: **10+1**
BBL: **18.5"**
Sights: **Front: Gold Bead**
Rear: Folding Leaf
- Blue Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Black & Red Laminate Stock
 - Scope Base Adapter
 - Detachable Rotary Magazine



DAVIDSON'S
EXCLUSIVE

10/22 Compact Davidson's Exclusive



Item #: 1211
Caliber: 22LR

- Capacity: **10+1**
BBL: **16.125"**
Sights: **Front: Gold Bead**
Rear: Folding Leaf
- Blue Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Black & Purple Laminate Stock
 - Scope Base Adapter
 - Detachable Rotary Magazine



10/22 Tactical Threaded Barrel



Item #: 1261
Caliber: 22LR

- Capacity: **10+1**
BBL: **16.125"**
Sights: **No Sights**
- Matte Black Finish
 - Semi-Automatic
 - Black Synthetic Stock
 - Scope Base Adapter
 - Detachable Rotary Magazine
 - Mini-14 Style Flash Suppressor

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▲ The polished bolt assembly was a bit rough at first, but broke in nicely, while leaving plenty of room to stay clear of the scope.



▲ The five-round rotary magazine proved to be easy to use and reliable.

interested in working with it in the mildly recoiling, flat-shooting .223 cartridge, especially if less skilled family members would ever need to shoot it.

■ .223 VERSUS 5.56

While many shooters believe the .223 Remington and the 5.56 NATO are basically the same cartridge, this is not the case. While it is always best to shoot the exact caliber/cartridge the chamber calls for,

it is certainly possible to shoot the .223 in a 5.56 chamber, but not vice versa. Firing .223 Remington cartridges in a firearm chambered for the 5.56x45mm NATO cartridge is safe but will degrade the potential accuracy of the rifle and the muzzle velocity due to the generous chamber dimensions of military specification rifles.

Current generation .223 Remington cartridges have a SAAMI maximum chamber pressure of

55,000 pounds per square inch designed for a barrel with 1:12-inch twist rate with a throat length of 0.085 to stabilize 55-grain bullets.

The 5.56mm NATO cartridge was first combat tested during the Vietnam War, with 5.56 cartridge being loaded with a 55-grain Spitzer-style bullet at a muzzle velocity of 3,250 fps from a 20-inch barrel with 1:14 inches or 1:12 inches twist rate with a maximum chamber pressure of 60,000 pounds per square inch. Throat length for the NATO 5.56 cartridge is 0.162, almost twice as much as the .223 Remington chamber.

A comparison of the 5.56x45mm NATO cartridge to the current .223 Remington cartridge reveals the 5.56x45mm cartridge cases have thicker sidewalls to prevent case splitting, a thicker case head to prevent case separation, annealed case mouth to prevent bullet setback, hardened primers to prevent slam-fire, crimped bullets at cannelure to prevent bullet setback due to barrel ramp, crimped primers to prevent primers from

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▲ The tang safety button is large and easy to manipulate, but does not interfere with the shooting handgrip.

backing out upon firing, especially when rifles are fired hot and hermetically sealed bullets and primers to prevent water damage if ammunition gets submerged in water. In a nutshell, the 5.56 NATO was designed to be a cartridge for combat, while the current-generation .223 is intended for sporting purposes.

■ FEATURES

Regardless of the caliber selected, the Ruger American Rifle comes well appointed with a number of useful features, including a compact version with an 18-inch barrel and an overall length of just more than a yard. The gun I tested was the full size model that has a 22-inch barrel, an overall length of 42 inches, an empty weight of 6.38 pounds and a 1:8 right-hand twist that will stabilize bullets from 55 to 77 grains in weight.

The American comes with a black ergonomic lightweight synthetic stock equipped with a soft vented recoil pad, a three-lug, 70-degree bolt assembly with a full body that offers ample scope clearance and a hammer-forged barrel with ultra-precise rifling that offers exceptional accuracy and a long service life.

The barrel is contained in an integral bedding block system that Ruger calls “Power Bedding” which positively locates the receiver and free floats the barrel. The receiver is equipped with two pieces of Weaver rail for mounting a scope, a large tang safety that is easily manipulated by the shooting hand thumb and a five round (.223, other calibers are four rounds) rotary magazine that offers smooth feeding and fits flush to the bottom of the stock.

As good as the features are, the one that stands out most to me is

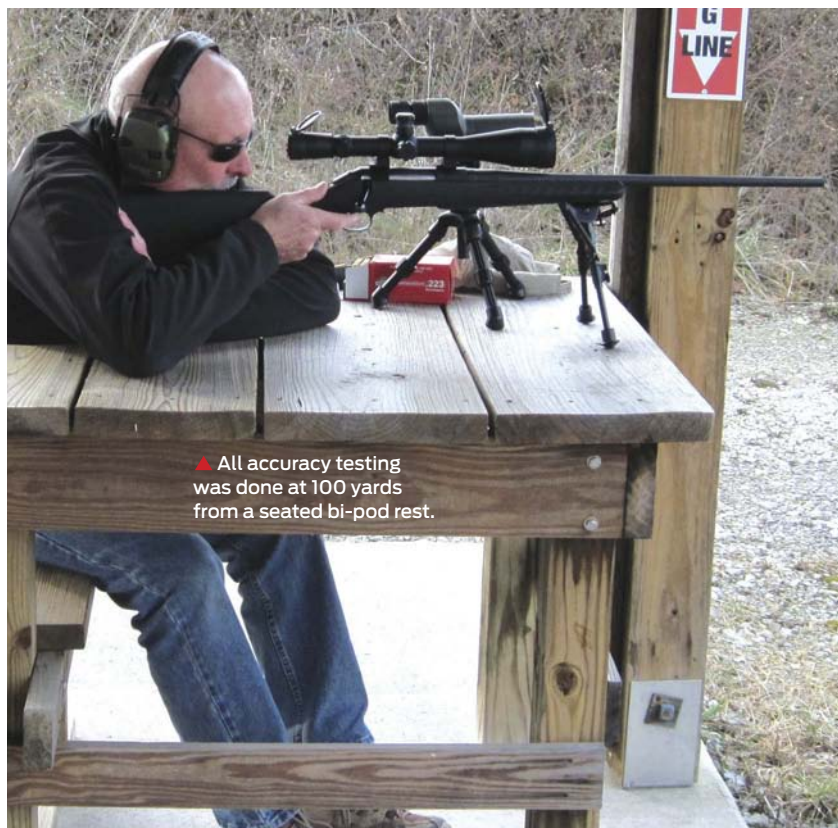
the Ruger “Marksmen Adjustable Trigger” that offers a very crisp release with little slack or creep and is shooter adjustable from 3 to 5 pounds. Factory firearms, whether they are handgun or long gun, seldom come with a trigger that is satisfactory for me and I have spent a ton of hard-earned money on action jobs. Sending this gun off to a gunsmith will be unnecessary, however, as this is one of the best factory triggers I have ever used. I had mine set for 3 pounds, which was actually 2 ¾ pounds according to my scale, but that was quite all right by me.

Before I headed to the range, I added two accessories that I feel are essential for a rifle of this type. First was a lightweight bi-pod made by Champion (formerly Shooters Ridge) a division of ATK. These rugged and sturdy bi-pods deliver a steady, portable and versatile shooting rest across a wide range of

terrain. Their classic and reliable design has helped shooters stay on target and can be purchased with adjustments from 6 to 29 inches. In this case, I used its low-profile model that adjusts from 6 to 9 inches.

Each Champion bi-pod incorporates compact, lightweight spring-return telescoping legs, easy attachment to sling swivel stud, with a rapid-fold, out-of-the-way-when-out-of-use capability. This low-cost, but robust bi-pod fit with the budget-priced Ruger American and I would have liked to follow with a low-cost optic as well, but this was not to be the case.

Due to a change in my training schedule, I did not have the time I thought I would to work with the .223 American. I had originally



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▲ The Corbon 62-grain DPX is no slacker in the accuracy department, logging a ¾-inch grouping, excellent from a rifle for the budget conscious.

wanted to get one of Leupold's reduced cost sporting scopes, but due to limited time, I went with what I had: a Leupold Mark 4 6.5-20x50mm LR/T (60080) Tactical Scope. Leupold actually calls this a "dual use" optic, suitable for both hunting/sport shooting and tactical applications, though it is obviously a very robust optic designed for hard use. Keep in mind light reflecting off lens surfaces diminishes image quality.

Leupold engineers developed Multicoat 4, a proprietary lens coating system to keep image quality

pristine which is one of the reasons Leupold optics are so good. Multicoat 4 increases the amount of all available light that reaches the eye while at the same time minimizes the reflections of the sky on the outer eyepiece.

You'll never be able to control the light, but with Leupold's Multicoat 4 you can always make the most of it. Also, your shooting can reach further into the twilight than ever before with Leupold's "Xtended Twilight Lens System." It goes a step further with wavelength specific lens coatings designed to

optimize the transmission of low-light wavelengths. The Mark 4 was mounted using two Leupold quick-detach scope rings and then aligned with the bore using Leupold's excellent magnetic bore sighting/zeroing tool, a must-have for any rifle shooter.

■ BUSTING CAPS

I charted the .223 American's accuracy by shooting five round groups at 100 yards across the sky screens of my Shooting Chrony chronograph from a bi-pod rest. I was reminded of how good Leupold's magnetic bore sighting tool is when my first round of 55-grain Remington FMJ ammo went through the center dot of the target.

Thinking I had the zeroing process "in the bag," I fired another four rounds only to discover they had spread out across the bottom half of the target. "Barrel break-in" is controversial, but I realized I needed to swab the barrel and did so and fired my next round high knowing I slapped the trigger in my haste. I took a deep breath, let it partially out and then smoothly depressed Ruger's excellent trigger and I was back on the orange dot. Good stuff.

THE RESULTS

Remington 55-grain FMJ	2 inches	3,016 fps
American eagle 55-grain FMJ	1.50 inches	3,002 fps
HPR 55-grain FMJ	2 inches	2,989 fps
Hornady 60-grain TAP	1.75 inches	2,957 fps
Corbon 62-grain DPX	0.75 inches	3,096 fps
Black Hills 69-grain Match King	1.25 inches	2,892 fps
Hornady 75-grain TAP	0.50 inches	2,909 fps

After swabbing the barrel again (some shooters think this should be done after every shot initially, while others feel it should be done after several shots) I settled in and tested a variety of loads to see just what the 1:8, 22-inch barrel would do.

While the American proved to be accurate with all of the loads tested, like all long guns it seemed to prefer some to others. In this case, the two preferred loads could not be any different. The Hornady 75-grain TAP is at the upper level of weight for a .223 bullet and, like most shooters, I prefer a heavier bullet regardless of whether I am shooting game or in defense, so I was pleased by this result. However, the Corbon DPX load, which uses the all copper Barnes-X bullet, of-

fers deep penetration and rapid expansion in a lighter bullet with increased velocity, in this case over 100 feet per second.

The Barnes-X bullet offers enhanced ballistic performance and is becoming the load of choice for law enforcement agencies that want a bullet that flies fast, stays together while expanding, and punches through intermediate barriers, but you don't get something for nothing. This enhanced bullet design is more expensive at the checkout stand, but then we must all decide what is worth our hard-earned cash.

The only thing I would note about the rest of the testing was the bolt was a bit sticky at first. Stay with it. As I forced the bolt back and forth, it smoothed out

nicely and I was eventually able to cycle the action while keeping my shoulder on the stock. In the end, the American Rifle in .223 proved once again that Ruger is America's gun maker and its commitment to both quality and value remains constant. **GW**

CONTACT

Sturm, Ruger and Company

Ruger.com

Champion/ATK

Champion.com

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Leupold.com

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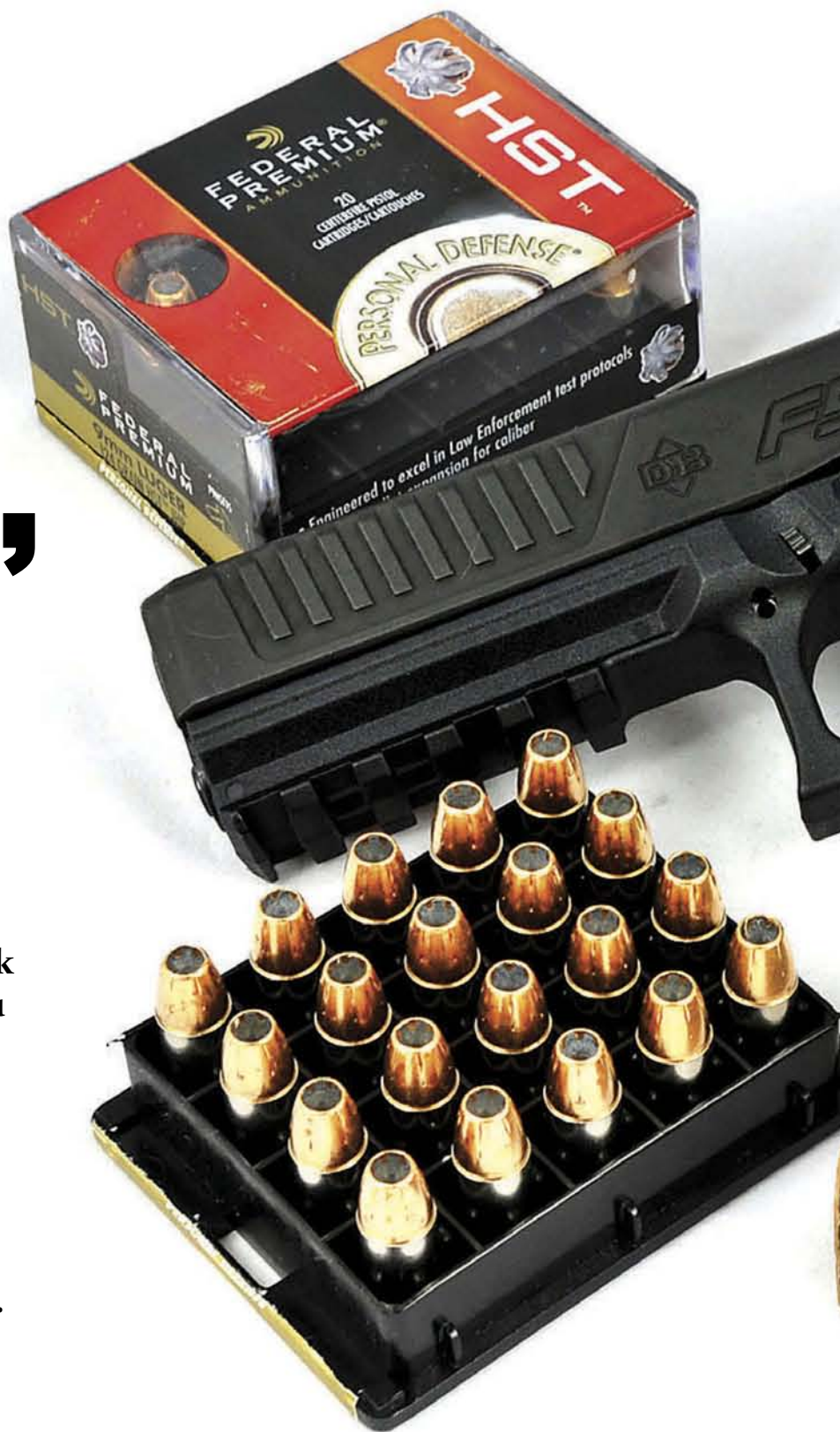
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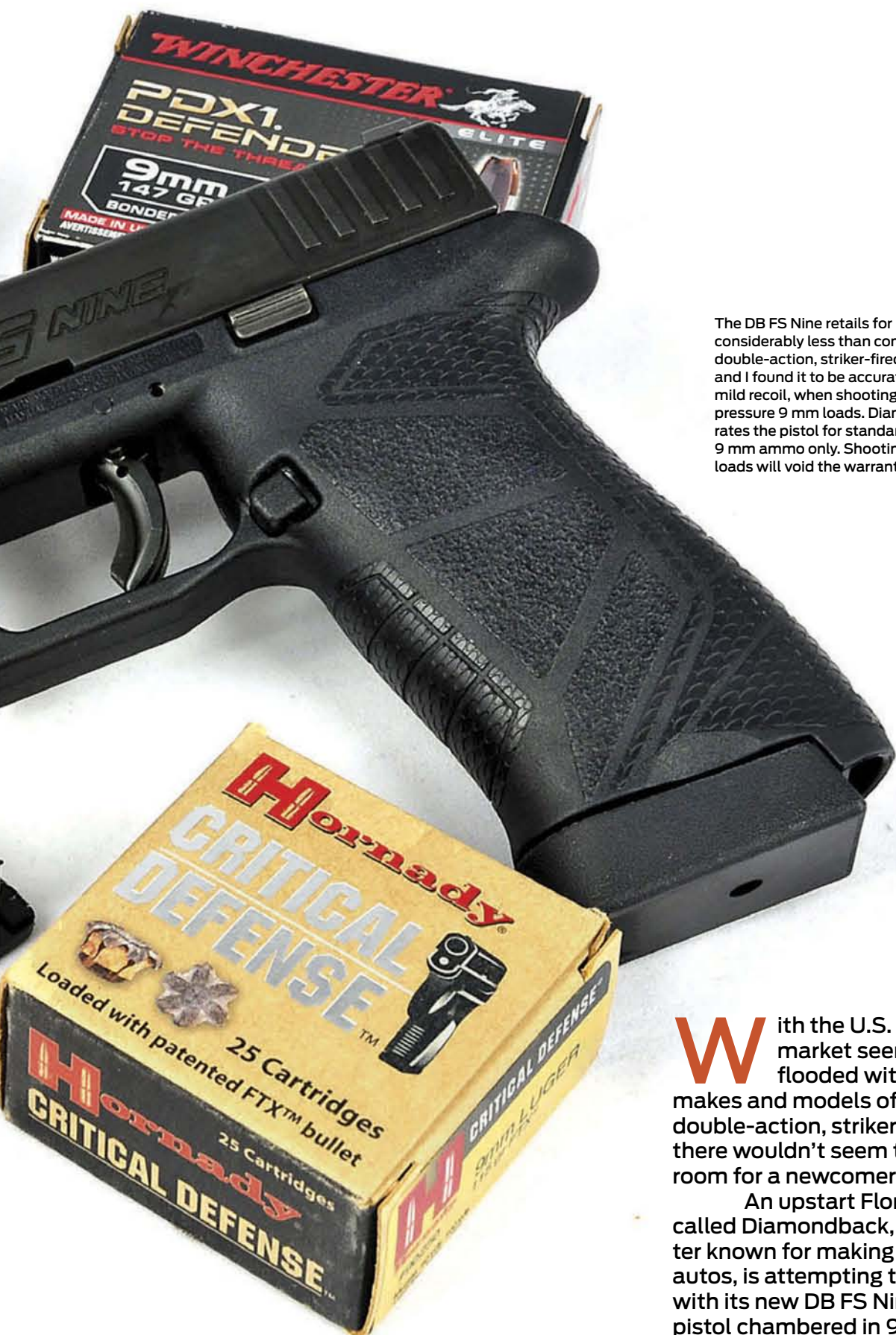
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INDUSTRIES

Big Pistol, *Small Price*

Text & Photos by Mike Dickerson

If you crossed a Glock with an M&P pistol, you would likely end up with something close to Diamondback's new full-size 9 mm, which sells for considerably less than either of the two better-known guns.





The DB FS Nine retails for considerably less than competing double-action, striker-fired pistols, and I found it to be accurate, with mild recoil, when shooting standard-pressure 9 mm loads. Diamondback rates the pistol for standard-pressure 9 mm ammo only. Shooting +P or +P+ loads will void the warranty.

With the U.S. handgun market seemingly flooded with numerous makes and models of full-size, double-action, striker-fired pistols, there wouldn't seem to be a lot of room for a newcomer to muscle in.

An upstart Florida company called Diamondback, which is better known for making small semi-autos, is attempting to do just that with its new DB FS Nine, a full-size pistol chambered in 9 mm.



▼ While the pistol's internals owe much to the basic Glock design, the ergonomics more closely resemble those of the S&W M&P pistol, minus the interchangeable backstraps.

grip and ergonomics are quite similar to S&W's M&P pistols. Since Glocks are known for their reliability and the M&P line is widely praised for its ergonomics, it's inevitable that the new pistol will be compared to both.

Starting with the basics, here's how the Diamondback stacks up.

■ THE BEST OF BOTH?

The DB FS Nine uses the now-familiar polymer double-stack frame and a Melonited black, stainless steel slide. The pistol measures 7.8 inches in length, stands 5.6 inches with a magazine in place and is 1-inch wide, excluding controls. The 4.75-inch Melonited chromoly steel barrel gives the pistol a sight radius of 6.25 inches.

The double-stack, 15-round magazine has a substantial pad on the bottom, making it easy to manipulate in loading and unloading the gun. The magazines are reportedly made by Checkmate, a supplier of quality factory magazines to many manufacturers.

It's doing so by bringing the gun to market at an over-the-counter price that's typically \$120 to \$200 less than popular competing guns, and it's getting some help from Taurus International, which markets and distributes the pistols.

In the world of firearms, where you generally get what you pay for (but not always), that poses an intriguing question: Is the gun worth it? You'll ultimately have to make that decision for yourself, but we'll help make it an informed decision.

Out of the box, one of the things that struck me about this pistol was how much the internal components and controls owe to the basic Glock design, while the

► Glock-like sights are of the white, three-dot variety.





▲ Basic field-stripping of the pistol is simple and fast.

The dust cover has an integral mil-spec Picatinny rail for attaching lights or lasers, and the magazine well is somewhat flared to speed magazine insertion. The slide has both front and rear cocking serrations to aid in racking the slide. The vertical serrations are cut deeply enough to provide a positive grip without being overly sharp. A cocking indicator located at the rear of the slide lets you quickly confirm the gun's status, and there's a small hole topside where you can see if a round is chambered.

As previously mentioned, this pistol owes much to the basic Glock design, including its Glock-like, fixed, three-dot white sights. The gun has no external safety, but it incorporates a firing pin block and trigger safety. The only visible exter-

nal controls are again Glock-like, with a slide lock catch (located below and just forward of the rear slide serrations), squared magazine release button and takedown lever. The internal components of the pistol clearly owe much to the Glock design. Take-down procedure is—no surprise here—exactly like that of a Glock, and can be accomplished quickly without use of tools.

Ergonomically, Diamondback did a pretty good job with this pistol, and in that regard, the gun departs significantly from the Glock design. In general grip size and conformation, it feels very similar to a full-size S&W M&P pistol, and that's not a bad thing. The frame has a bit of a beavertail extension, located high on the rear of the grip, to prevent slide bite. Combined

with a relatively low bore axis, this makes the pistol comfortable to shoot. Recoil should not be an issue for the majority of shooters. The grip is textured at the front, back and sides, with dual palm swells, providing a positive gripping surface in all weather conditions. The stippling pattern could be a bit more aggressive, but that's a purely subjective observation. In practice, it works fine.

The trigger guard is squared off at the front, giving you a spot to rest the index finger of the supporting hand. The trigger guard is also undercut at the rear, which helps you take a snug, high grip, with the web between your thumb and index finger snugged up against the beavertail at the rear of the grip.

Overall, the grip is well



⊕ SPECIFICATIONS

Diamondback DB FS Nine

Action: Striker-fired semi-auto

Frame: Polymer

Caliber: 9 mm

Mag. Capacity: 15 rounds

Barrel Length: 4.75 inches

Overall length: 7.8 inches

Weight (Empty): 21.5 ounces

Sights: 3-dot, drift-adjustable rear

Finish: Matte black Melonited
slide and barrel

MSRP: \$483.34

▲ The trigger on the test gun, which includes a blade-style trigger safety, broke at an average pull weight of 7 pounds, 5 ounces.



executed, and it definitely feels better in my hand than the grip of a Glock, but you won't find the interchangeable backstraps of the M&P and other pistols on this gun. As a result, it may be a real handful for those with smaller hands. I have medium-sized hands, and found that I had to shift my grip to reach the magazine release button with my thumb, which I have to do with a number of other full-size pistols, as well. Of course, those extra backstraps would have added to the cost of the pistol, and there had to be some tradeoffs to hold the price down.

One tradeoff I don't favor is the fact that the gun comes with only one magazine, so if you require more than one (and who doesn't?) you'll need to order it at \$25 a pop. I just don't get this. The street price of this pistol is low enough that you

▼ Slide serrations are cut deeply enough to provide a positive grip without being overly sharp.



▲ This close-up shows the polished feed ramp and chamber mouth.

could add the cost of another magazine and still be well below the price of competitive double-action, striker-fired pistols sold with two magazines by other major manufacturers. The gun does come with a lockable, hard plastic case.

■ A FEW QUIRKS

Diamondback says the pistols ship from the factory with a trigger pull of around 5.5 pounds but the trigger on our test gun broke at an average of 7 pounds, 5 ounces. Based on reports from other users, there seems to be some variation in the weight of trigger pull. It feels somewhat similar to a Glock trigger, but with a bit more creep. Reset is fairly short, and you can, happily, both feel it and hear it.

In testing, I fired only standard-pressure 9 mm ammunition since Diamondback does not rate the pistol for anything else. As stated in the owner's manual, "Because of

inconsistency in loading pressures, we do not recommend the use of reloaded, +P or +P+ ammunition." Not everyone needs or wants to shoot the hotter loads, but if you do, you should understand that use of +P ammo will void the warranty.

Functionally, the pistol left me with some mixed feelings. It had one stovepipe jam early on, but otherwise I experienced no issues with the pistol feeding, firing or ejecting reliably as I put several hundred rounds through it in testing. The gun did, however, display a few quirks.

The slide lock button proved to be a bit sticky and challenging to use as a slide release, so I ended up sling-shooting the first round from every magazine to load the pistol. That's not a deal-breaker, however, as I tend to do that with most full-size pistols, anyway.

The magazine release button also required a lot more pressure to release a magazine than I'm used to

PERFORMANCE RESULTS DIAMONDBACK FS NINE

LOAD	AVG. MUZZLE VELOCITY (FPS)	AVG. 25-YARD GROUP (INCHES)	BEST GROUP 25-YARDS (INCHES)
Federal American Eagle 124-gr. FMJ	1,109	3.89	2.82
Federal HST 124 gr.	1,178	3.72	2.26
Federal Hydra-Shok 124 gr.	1,095	3.88	2.58
Hornady Critical Defense 115-gr. FTX	1,204	3.74	2.43
Hornady Critical Duty 135-gr. FlexLock	1,032	3.95	2.61



The new pistol comes with a hard case, but only one magazine.

with similarly sized double-action pistols. That, combined with the fact that I had to shift my grip to reach the button, left me questioning just how quickly I could swap magazines if I needed to do so in a hurry. It took some practice, but I found I could swap magazines fairly quickly if I concentrated on pushing that button with some real pressure. Once you do fully depress the button, magazines drop free easily.

On two occasions, the locked-

back slide released of its own accord when I slapped a magazine into place with some authority. I've handled some Glock pistols that do this as well, and I know a few shooters who rather euphemistically call that a "design feature." I call it a design flaw, because it could theoretically increase the chance of an unintentional discharge if the user has a finger on the trigger at the time the slide releases. Of course, some competitive shooters prefer an auto

slide release for increased speed, but they train appropriately. For the unsuspecting, it can come as a bit of a surprise.

The slide also failed to lock back on one occasion after the last round in the magazine had been fired. I didn't have the pistol long enough to decide if any of these incidents were persistent issues or just representative of the hiccups that often occur when breaking in a new gun.

To be fair, I conducted all testing of the gun as it arrived, straight from the box, without prior cleaning or lubrication. I do this deliberately to duplicate the experience of a buyer who may not take the time to ensure the gun is properly lubed and ready to go.

■ PASSING MARKS FOR ACCURACY

With its fixed, three-dot sights, the pistol shot straight, but a bit

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▲ The pistol shot straight but a bit low in this rapid-fire, 10-yard group. Taking a full sight picture put the bullets where they belonged.

low for me when shooting offhand. It shares that trait, oddly enough, with several models of full-size SIG pistols, and I'm sure that has a lot to do with how some guns fit my hand, the length of reach to the trigger and other variables. In any event, the low point of impact was easily cured with the Diamondback by taking a full sight picture (which I prefer to do in defensive shooting) versus a six o'clock hold. I had no difficulty getting tight groups when rapid-firing from 10 yards. That's the real-world standard by which I judge defensive handguns, and the DB FS Nine passed that test easily.

The pistol shot acceptably well in accuracy testing, or about as accurately as I can shoot these days with iron sights and progressive

eyeglass lenses from the bench at 25 yards. Armed with three standard-pressure loads from Federal and two from Hornady, I fired a minimum of four five-shot groups over sandbags at the bench. Surprisingly, the pistol didn't really show a strong preference for one load over another. Best groups ran from 2.26 inches to 2.82 inches for all loads, averaging out at 2.54 inches.

Federal's 124-gr. HST load turned in the single best group of 2.26 inches and the best average group size of 3.72 inches. Again, there wasn't a lot of difference, with all tested loads turning in average groups measuring just a bit less than 4 inches.

Velocities, as measured on my Competitive Edge Dynamics M2

chronograph, came in pretty close to advertised velocities, thanks to the pistol's 4.75-inch cut-rifling barrel. The Federal American Eagle 124-gr. FMJ load and the Federal 124-gr. Hydra-Shok load were clocked, on average, just slightly under factory-stated velocities. The greatest difference was noted with the Hornady 115-gr. Critical Defense load. That round averaged 64 fps faster than claimed velocity.

While the DB FS Nine offers a lot of bang for the buck, only time will tell if these new guns are sufficiently reliable and durable to establish a long-term presence in the marketplace. Toward that end, I would gently suggest that inclusion of a second magazine would be a good place to start.

At the time this story was written, purchase of the DB FS Nine included a free membership in the National Rifle Association. **GW**

CONTACT

Competitive Edge Dynamics
CEDhk.com

Diamondback Firearms
<http://DiamondbackFirearms.com>

Federal Premium Ammunition
FederalPremium.com

Hornady Ammunition
Hornady.com

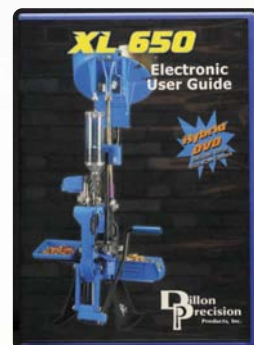
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PRE-PACKAGED *PREP*

Text & Photos by Dave Workman

Taurus packages its new kit inside this rugged SKB hard-sided carrying case.



Surviving the first day after a major catastrophe requires both the skills and the tools, and this new Taurus First 24 package could be your best friend.

Hurricane Andrew. Hurricane Katrina. The 1964 Good Friday Alaska earthquake.

Each of these disasters should remind people that in the first 24 hours after a major catastrophe, when emergency services will be stretched thin or simply non-existent, and when looters, hungry and possibly distressed and dangerous animals become a genuine threat, you are essentially on your own, especially if you're caught away from home.



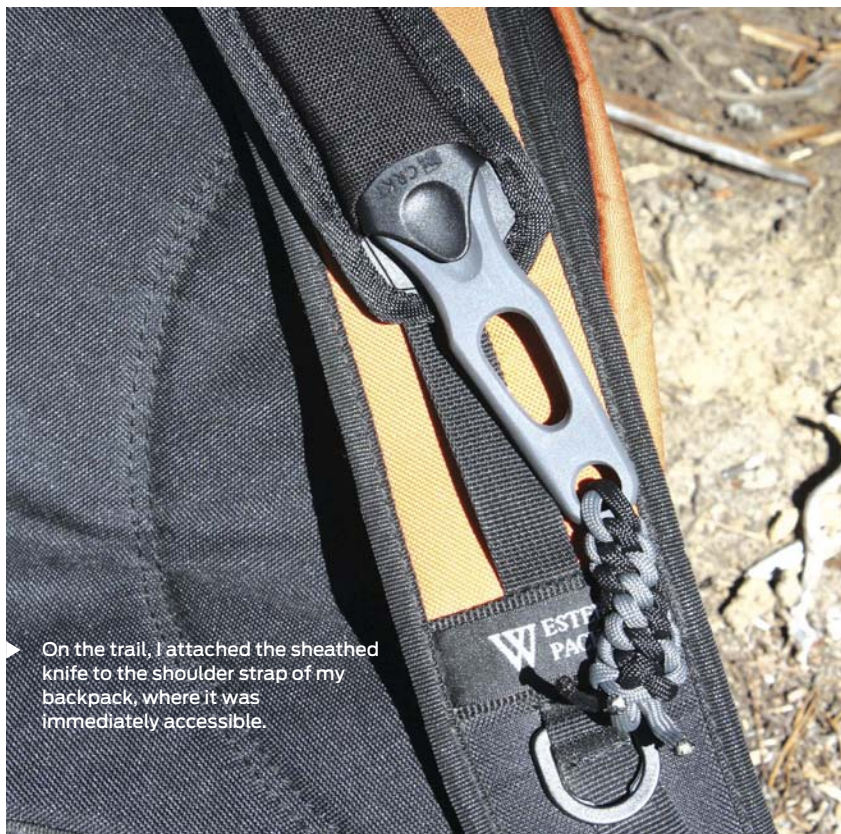
▲ To survive a disaster, it sometimes requires a firearm. The new "First 24" from Taurus puts a gun in your hand, along with essential survival accessories. It doesn't take up much space behind the seat of a car, truck or SUV, and it could literally be a lifesaver in an emergency.



Taurus thought of just about everything with the "First 24." The .357 Magnum revolver is augmented by a pair of HKS speed loaders, and CRKT supplies its knife with a sheath.



▲ Inside the case, you will find a handgun, ammunition, speed loaders, a knife, 20 feet of nylon cord, an emergency flashlight, space blanket, fire starting kit and more.



On the trail, I attached the sheathed knife to the shoulder strap of my backpack, where it was immediately accessible.

⊕ SPECIFICATIONS

Taurus 'First 24'

Manufacturer: Taurus International

Model: Model 617 revolver

Caliber: .357 Magnum

Capacity: Seven rounds

Action: Double/single

Sights: Fixed

Accessories: SKB hard case, two HKS speedloaders, CRKT Sting knife w/sheath, Brite-Strike flashlight, Brite-Strike APALS lights, Zippo fire starter Slim Line battery caddy, 20 feet of nylon paracord, space blanket, Suunto compass.

MSRP: \$1,399

It's up to you to survive the first 24 hours. Your family's survival could depend on that as well.

Many individual "preppers" have gone to great lengths to put together emergency kits with essential tools and gear to get them through that first day. Now Taurus has done likewise, with a package that was first previewed for me at the 2014 National Rifle Association gathering in Indianapolis.

Carefully enclosed in a heavily-padded hard-side case are such necessities as nylon cord, emergency fire-starter, small Brite-Strike flashlight and spare batteries, Brite-Strike APALS emergency light sources (non-battery), a razor-sharp CRKT knife, Suunto Clipper micro-compass, space blanket and, most important of all, a handgun and spare ammunition.

Two versions of this survival kit are now offered. The handgun is ei-

ther a Taurus .357 Magnum Model 617 seven-round revolver or the Taurus Judge, chambered for the .45 Colt/.410 shotshell.

At my request, Taurus sent out the .357 Magnum package for testing and evaluation, and I was pleased to see that it also contained a pair of HKS speed loaders. I have HKS speed loaders for all of my personal double-action wheel-guns, so I'm familiar with their operation.

There was but one thing missing from this kit when it was first shown to me: A holster for the handgun. It's not that the lockable SKB iSeries hard-sided case should be discarded after stuffing all those goodies in your pockets. I'd never suggest such a thing because, in a



The Taurus Model 617 provides seven rounds of .357 Magnum stopping power. I found that even with full house loads, it's comfortable to shoot.

pinch, that case can be utilized to carry other gear one finds “on the way” to a safe location, or it can be a devastatingly effective close quarters weapon.

Anybody who has ever been hit upside the head accidentally with a briefcase can attest to what kind of damage might be inflicted by someone deliberately clobbering an attacker with something like this rugged case. We’re talking a 10-count on the canvas, at the very least.

My strong suggestion is to add an Uncle Mike’s nylon holster, which I did for a little sojourn into the mountains of Central Washington to put this kit to the test. It passed with flying colors, of course.

The First 24 comes with a dis-



This is no ordinary revolver, as I found out. It’s been tuned up and has some custom features, including this wide, smooth trigger.

play ammunition box from Hornady. This should be replaced immediately upon purchase with a box of live ammunition. If this were my case, that would be a box of Hornady’s Critical Defense ammunition, or—as I discovered during the range phase of this evaluation—a box of 125-grain Speer Gold Dots.

Every gun shows a preference for a particular cartridge, and with the Gold Dots, in front of a witness, I put seven rounds into or just outside of the 10-ring on a Birchwood Casey target, and I also bounced a tin can around at 25 yards. That’s not bad for a 2-inch revolver with fixed sights!

That’s not to say the suggested Hornady Critical Defense ammunition should be replaced by a substitute. My experience with Critical Defense has been nothing short of stellar.

The Critical Defense round is topped by a 125-grain FTX bullet clocking about 1,500 fps out of an 8-inch barrel at the muzzle, but out of a short tube on the Taurus 617,

you’ll lose some of that, dropping down into the neighborhood of 1,200-1,250 fps. But my little test with different ammo had a purpose.

In a pinch, you just might have to grab the first ammunition you can get your hands on. Taurus made the right choice by selecting a .357 Magnum-chambered revolver for the First 24 because it is the most versatile of them all, in my opinion. It will also chamber the .38 Special, and even Plus-P ammunition is going to work.

As for those First 24 kits with The Judge revolvers, .45 Colt cartridges might be a little less easy to find in a complete breakdown. However, it’s pretty common to find .410-bore ammunition and at close range, the .410 shotshell, even with No. 4, 5 or 6 shot, is a formidable deterrent for angry man or beast, and it can also put food in the pot.

Both revolvers are fitted with Hogue’s superb, one-piece Mono-Grip. Hogue’s trademark textured surface has proven itself to me so many times in the wet, miserable



Pacific Northwest that it's almost superfluous to mention. In an emergency, you're not going to want to have a slippery gun in your hand.

COMPONENTS

We mentioned the various components of The First 24 earlier. Now let's take a closer look.



The cylinder latch is one of only two parts of the handgun that are not finished with black X-Coat.

Columbia River Knife & Tool (CRKT) is renowned for producing rugged, sharp knives. I happen to own several and have tested even more, and have yet to experience a failure. The Sting Survival knife is a small one-piece model with several purposes beyond a defensive use. For example, it is tough enough to be used as a spike to run nylon cord through the skeleton handle for anchoring an overnight shelter.

You could also deliver a pretty good belt to somebody's jaw with your hand wrapped around the handle. Its keen edge can be used for skinning small game, or for gutting a fish. Weighing only about 4 ounces with its nylon cord, the Sting comes with a sheath that can be carried on the shoulder strap of a backpack.

The Brite-Strike APALS lights are a thoughtful addition. These tiny lights, provided in red, green and white, operate up to 80 hours in three modes: strobe, blinking, and solid light. They have an adhe-

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Taurus designers make it easy to load up the HKS speed loaders and carry them in the case, by allowing padding plugs to be pulled out to make extra room for the cartridges.

sive surface on the back so they may be stuck to various objects. They can be used to mark trails or set perimeters around a campsite.

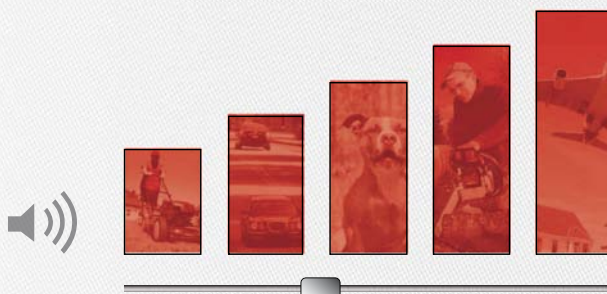
I also like the Brite-Strike flashlight. It also operates in three modes: high and low beam, and strobe. One thing that has been discovered about strobes is that when suddenly flashed in someone's eyes, a strobe will disorient people. That could provide the edge one needs to draw a gun or get a running start to flee. The addition of spare batteries is a great idea.

The flashlight is also stout enough to double as a small impact weapon if the necessity arises, and the light is bright enough to be seen from several miles away.

Adding the nylon cord was a good idea, and there are 20 feet of it in the First 24 kit. One never finds too many uses for this stuff in a survival situation.



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Among the useful components found in the "First 24" is this handsome Brite-Strike emergency flashlight, with a high and low beam and a strobe.

included in this kit is almost weightless, so it is no burden at all to carry.

Last but not least, the addition of a survival compass had to have been inspired by somebody with an outdoors background. I've seen people get lost a hundred yards from their car. If you don't know the direction you're traveling in, it is easy to walk in circles, and that can be fatal.

■ SHOOTING THE TAURUS

Every gun test must involve shooting, and as mentioned earlier, I cranked off some rounds with the seven-shot stainless steel Model 617 Taurus. This is no run-of-the-mill revolver just stuck in a box as a sales gimmick.

The First 24 Model 617 features a custom-tuned action and a chamfered barrel and chambers. The cylinder has been timed, and other features include a slight "melt" profile that has removed any sharp edges; a checkered and re-profiled hammer; smooth wide trigger and an exclusive black X-Coat finish in custom shadow camo, which is tough and durable.

Adding a touch of class is the stainless cylinder release latch and cylinder pin, but everything else is matte camo black.

Like other Taurus handguns, the Model 617 has a locking mechanism built into the hammer that can be engaged or disengaged with a hex key. Two keys are supplied with the gun, hidden in the lid of the SKB case behind the foam padding.

Sized about the same as a Model 19 Smith & Wesson snubbe, but with the advantage of an additional chamber for a seventh shot, the Model 617 Taurus is no wallflower when it comes to putting out



This Zippo fire starter and 20 feet of nylon cord also come as part of the package.

The Zippo Outdoors Emergency fire starter kit looks like a cigarette lighter, but it is not. Inside the orange plastic shell is a flint and wheel, plus four waxed cotton fire starters. In a survival situation, having warmth as well as shelter—and something to protect it with—is paramount.

This thing is easy to use, and Zippo put some thought into it. The orange plastic case is highly visible

even at night when hit with a beam of light. The waxed cotton will provide ample heat to start a fire, and if you do your part to keep the flame going, you'll be comfortable.

Having a space blanket is no small advantage in an emergency. They have been known to keep people alive when they might have died from hypothermia. The Grabber space blanket



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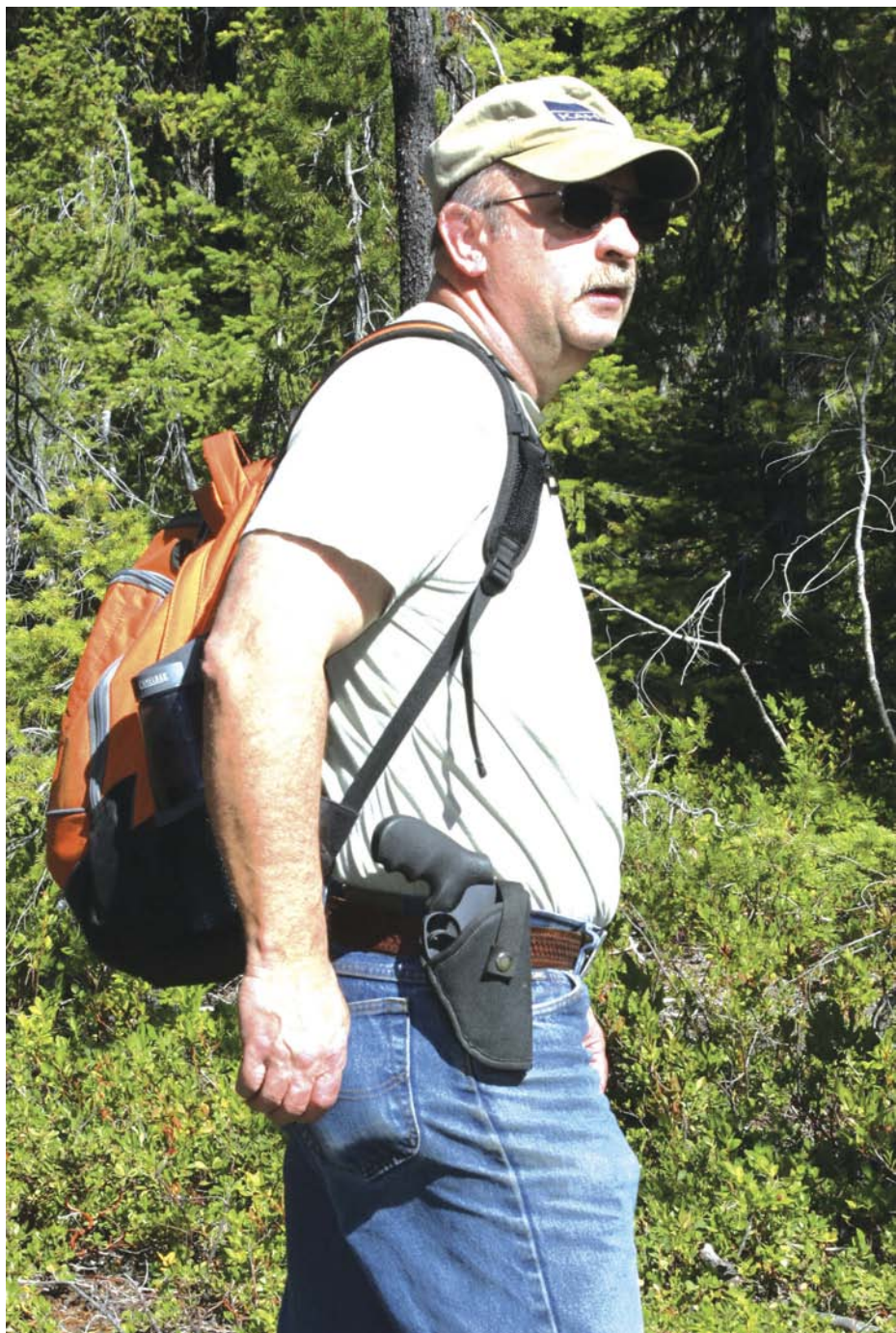
M&P® BODYGUARD® 380

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FEATURING A BUILT-IN

Crimson  **Trace**

LASER.



▲ One thing not found in the kit is a holster, so I tried out the Model 617 in an older Uncle Mike's nylon rig, and it worked perfectly on the trail.

lead. I tried it in a couple of different holsters, including an old Uncle Mike's nylon rig and one from DeSantis with a thumb break snap.

Perhaps the First 24 kit doesn't include a holster for a reason. Leaving that choice to

the individual user might be the smart move.

At the range, I had a mix of ammunition that all functioned as expected. Out of a 2-inch barrel, one doesn't get the full performance from any .357 Magnum cartridge, but it's still enough energy to get

anyone's attention. People have stopped black bears with the .357 Magnum, and deer-sized game as well. Predators of the two-legged variety are also at a distinct disadvantage.

This really is a comfortable revolver to shoot. It doesn't have the recoil one might expect and that's partly due to the weight. At just more than 28 ounces, that stainless steel handgun is hefty, but in an emergency, that weight can be comforting.

The double-action squeeze does not require weight lifting to achieve, and the single-action trigger let-off is pretty good. My test gun had the slightest creep in single-action mode, but I doubt that it will make much difference.

One thing about fixed-sight snub guns is that one must spend a bit of range time to determine where these things shoot at 25 yards. My first few rounds, using Black Hills 125-grainers, went low and right, and once I got the hang of that, I merely held high on the target and to the left of the numeral "9" in the 9-ring and started hitting homers.

This is all the more reason to experiment with different ammunition and find something your particular handgun likes.

The First 24 is like a fire extinguisher, frankly. It's one of those pieces of equipment you really hope you will never need to use. At the same time, if you do need it, you need it pretty badly and it may make the difference between riding out a disaster and living to tell about it, or becoming just one more statistic. **GW**

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Waterfowl Focus

Text & Photos
by Thomas C. Tabor

7 Tips for Better Goose Hunting

A fine morning in the goose blind produced this mixed bag comprised of Snow and Canada geese.



For many waterfowlers the pinnacle of their hunting season comes when they are peering out of a goose pit overlooking a stubble field of corn or wheat, or hunched over in a well-camouflaged blind on the edge of a marsh.

But encouraging a bunch of big honkers that may have already had a couple of handfuls of steel BBs bounced off their undersides to come within shotgun range can sometimes pose a real challenge. Hopefully the following tips will help you to add a goose or two to your holiday dinner table.



▲ A low-profile, natural-appearing blind like this one, constructed in a farmer's fencerow, is perfectly suited for ambushing a flock of geese.

1. SPREAD PLACEMENT

There are essentially two basic philosophies when it comes to decoy placement. The first method is intended to encourage the birds to sit down directly within the hunter's fake flock. But geese are darn big birds—one of the smaller species will frequently have a wing spread of around four feet and a large honker can sometimes measure six feet between its wing tips—and for that reason, they prefer to have a bit more space to drop into than the smaller waterfowl.

Because of this, the chances of one of these huge birds being tempted to settle between closely positioned decoys isn't all that great. So if your objective is to have the birds come directly into your spread it is imperative to space your decoys out at least eight to ten feet. But I personally think a better approach in many hunting situations is to encourage the birds to settle in a larger open area that you have specifically chosen for them.

Arranging decoys in either an elongated 'J' formation or a 'U' pattern with the open areas specifically positioned where you want the birds to settle into frequently

works best for me. In the 'J' formation, the upper portion of the layout works like the lights on an airport runway, guiding the planes in or in this case the geese in, to specifically where you want them. In the 'U' pattern, the open area in the center is typically positioned in front of the blind and like in the 'J', the appeal of the unobstructed open area draws the birds right into your muzzle.

2. KNOW YOUR LIMITS

It is crucially important for all waterfowlers to be capable of

accurately judging the range of the birds that they are drawing down on, and when using steel shot, that range rarely exceeds about 35 yards. When hunting geese, some hunters naturally underestimate that distance due to the large size of the birds.

A very easy way to establish a quick reference of your maximum shooting distance is to pace off 35 yards from the blind, then place a single, life-sized decoy at that point. In this case, all it takes to make sure you are not shooting beyond your limits is to gauge the visual size of that decoy, as opposed to the size of the live birds overhead. If the real thing appears smaller than the decoy, they may be outside of the effective range of your shotgun.

3. BLIND CONSTRUCTION

There is no shortage of commercially built blinds, many of which are great products. Nevertheless, without some additional natural camouflaging, these blinds will likely stand out as badly as I would in a Mr. Universe contest. Whether you begin with one of these prod-



There are few things in a waterfowler's life that garners more excitement than seeing a huge flock of Canada geese working their way toward the hunter's blind.

CANADA SNOW

The two most popular species of geese are the Snow and the Canada, with the latter being the most common. The sizes of both species vary sometimes dramatically within the subspecies, but generally the Snow geese pale in size to a big Canada honker. If we looked at average sizes, we would find that the larger subspecies of Snow geese would measure about 30 or 31 inches in length and weigh up to a little less than 10 pounds. The Canada geese, on the other hand, could have a length of up to about 43 inches and tip the scales on the average at about 12 ½ pounds, with some even known to come in at a whopping 23 pounds.

ucts or build your own blind from scratch, it must blend into the natural surroundings to be completely effective. I like to take along a machete and small pair of pruners so I can cut some natural vegetation around the immediate hunting area to add to any blind we erect.

A low-profile blind is usually the best, and a fencerow or ditch can provide a great starting point for the construction. For our own hunting we frequently pack in a homemade blind consisting of a short roll of chicken wire that has been inner-laced with dry grass and twigs. But that only provides a start to our blind. While one hunter places the decoys, the other hunter cuts and adds vegetation from the immediate area. Within a few minutes we have a very concealable blind that fits in with local vegetation. When we are through hunting for the day, the blind can be rolled back up and stored away until our next hunting trip.

■ 4. TOO MUCH CALLIN' & FLAGGIN'

Excited hunters occasionally have a tendency to overdo their calling and flagging. That's a nature inclination that I even have a hard

time avoiding sometimes, particularly when I spot a huge flock of big honkers moving in my direction. Nevertheless, an excessive amount of either can be worse than not enough.

If the birds are showing an interest in the spread, the wise hunter will either remain mum or nearly mum, and if flagging is used, only an occasionally flap should be necessary. If the birds begin to lose interest, however, and are not circling for a better look, it may be a good time to become a little more aggressive with the calling and flapping of the fake wings.

■ 5. TO PAINT OR NOT TO PAINT

We've all seen the fellows on Duck Dynasty with their painted faces. Personally, I've never been able to get into painting myself up in that way. Nevertheless, there is good, sound basis for that sort of thing. Nothing stands out in the

morning sun like a bright, shiny face looking skyward. So, it is up to you whether you choose to adorn yourself in that manner or not.

But if you're like me and choose not to, it is extremely important that you realize just how vulnerable you are in this area. As a flock eyeballs your decoys, remember there may be a couple hundred eyeballs looking downward at you. To provide a bit more coverage of my face, I like to wear a Boonie-style hat, rather than the more popular baseball cap. The brim of the Boonie provides just a bit more coverage of my face. Nevertheless, no matter whether you decide to paint-up or not, it is imperative that you keep your face down while the birds are circling or dropping in and keep your movements slow and deliberate.

■ 6. BIG BOY LOADS

When the push first came to move away from lead shot for waterfowl hunting, it resulted in



My friend and fellow waterfowl aficionado, John Englert, shows off a harvest of Snows.



▲ I prefer a Bonnie-style hat for waterfowl hunting because it helps to hide my face more than a simple baseball cap.

severely limiting the waterfowler's ability to be effective. I can remember when iron and steel shot shells first came into being. These were absolutely terrible shells that damaged barrels and wounded more ducks and geese than they brought down. I even have a few of those shells still in my cartridge collection that were marked by the factory as "Experimental." Eventually the shells got better, but they still fall short of the potential of lead.

Because steel and the other non-toxic metals are lighter in weight than the lead, in order to maintain as high of energy as possible, the manufacturers increased velocities and encouraged the use of larger size shot. The downside to using larger diameter shot lies in the fact that fewer pieces of shot

can be squeezed into the shotshell hull. What size shot you chose to shoot for geese is a matter of personal preference, with the most common sizes being: BB, BBB, T and (on occasion) F. These carry the diameter of: .18 inches, .19 inches, .20 inches and .22 inches respectively, and when we compare the number of pellets contained in an ounce we find that there are 72 BBs, 61 BBBs, 53 Ts and 40 Fs.

So you might ask, what is best the best size? I personally prefer multiple shot impacts on birds over that of slightly larger shot size, so I generally select BB size in steel for my own goose hunting. I certainly wouldn't hold it against any hunter for using BBB. But when it comes to bigger T and F sizes, I believe those are best left on the store shelf.

GET CHEEKY

Outside of shooting behind the geese, possibly the single biggest reason for missing a shot is when the shooter picks their head up off the comb of the stock in order to get a better look at the birds they are shooting. Only a couple of millimeters off the comb and it will almost always result in a miss. So, be sure to anchor your cheek firmly on the comb at every trigger pull and your shooting success will likely improve greatly.

7. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE FLIGHT SPEED

Possibly more misses on geese stem from shooting behind the bird than any other reason. Largely this problem stems from the size of the geese and an underestimate of the speed at which they are flying. Because of the huge size of these birds, they appear to be flying much slower than they actually are. The problem only intensifies when pass shooting, with the geese moving at speeds all the way up to about 55 mph.

“I generally select BB size in steel for my own goose hunting.”

If you are lucky enough to have the birds dropping into your decoy spread, speeds are obviously reduced but after that first shot rings out, things have a tendency to change quickly. At that point, you must swing through the birds and provide an ample amount of lead in order for your shot to connect. Recognizing the illusion of the slower speed, I frequently and consciously give an extra bird length of lead when the birds are at extreme range and moving at a right angle from me. **GW**

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Text and photos by James E. House

Testing Speer Gold Dot Bullets



The Gold Dot bullets shown are (left to right) 90-, 115-, and 124-grain 9mm and the 125- and 135-grain 0.357-inch versions.

O ver the last couple of decades, an enormous number of bullet designs have been developed, and the selection of bullets available to the shooter who hand loads handgun ammunition is perhaps the widest it has ever been.



Load Details and Results Obtained Using Speer Gold Dot (GD) Bullets

Caliber	Bullet	Case	Primer	O.L., in.	Powder	Gr.	Vel.	S.D.
380 Auto	90-gr GD	Win.	Win.	0.965	CFE Pistol	3.9	885	17
380 Auto	90-gr GD	Win.	Win.	0.965	Titegroup	3.0	914	25
380 Auto	90-gr GD	Win.	Win.	0.965	Win 231	3.4	941	23
9mm	115-gr GD	Win.	Win.	1.126	Power Pistol	5.8	1,083	15
9mm	124-gr GD	Win.	Win.	1.128	CFE Pistol	4.8	956	12
38 Special	125-gr GD	Starline	Win.	1.458	AutoComp	5.8*	997	24
38 Special	135-gr GDSB	Starline	Win.	1.455	Win. 231	4.5	848	10
40 S&W	155-gr GD	Win.	Win.	1.126	Titegroup	5.4	1,055	11
40 S&W	165-gr GD	Win.	Win.	1.124	Power Pistol	7.1	1,070	14
40 S&W	180-gr GD	Win.	Win.	1.126	AutoComp	5.9	1,004	13
45 Auto	185-gr GD	Rem.	Rem.	1.227	Titegroup	5.5	895	13
45 Auto	230-gr GD	Rem.	Rem.	1.250	Unique	5.9	816	11

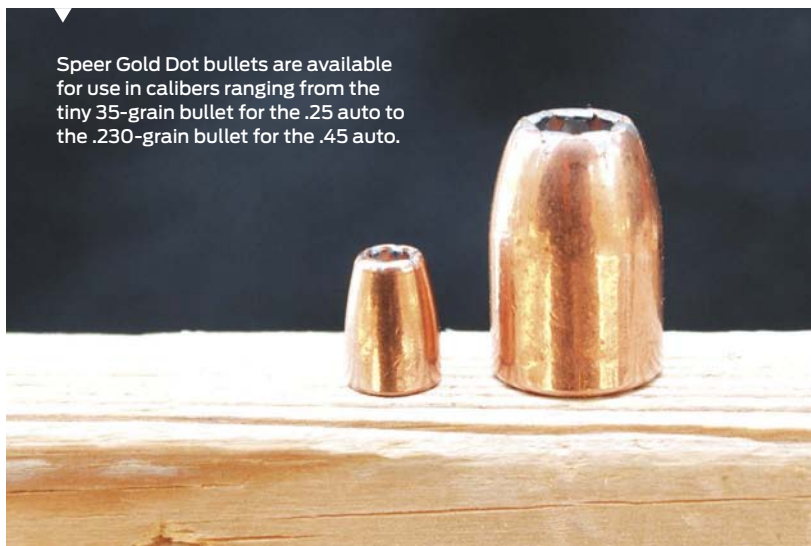
**This is a maximum load that gives +P velocity. Not for use in guns with aluminum frames. Velocities are shown as the average for seven shots. S.D. is the standard deviation in feet per second (fps).*

These loads were safe and reliable in the author's handguns, but neither the author nor the publisher accepts any responsibility for their preparation and use by others.

This photo illustrates a 165-grain .40-caliber bullet as it progresses from the plated slug to the cylinder with the cavity punched to the finished bullet.



Speer Gold Dot bullets are available for use in calibers ranging from the tiny 35-grain bullet for the .25 auto to the .230-grain bullet for the .45 auto.



In addition, nearly all bullet makers currently offer some sort of premium handgun bullets. Some of these are used in factory-loaded ammunition, and the vast majority of virtually all high-performance bullets are hollow-point designs.

Speer's entry to the realm of premium handgun bullets is the Gold Dot. This extensive line spans a range from the tiny 35-grain bullet for the .25 auto to the 230-grain bullet for the .45 auto and includes all popular calibers in between. Gold Dot bullets are manufactured by a process that electro-chemically applies a copper plating on a hardened lead core. As the bullets come from the plating tanks, they are completely enclosed by and bonded to the jacket material, and they resemble a fully jacketed bullet.

Next, a special punch is used to make the nose cavity. At this point, the bullet is essentially a cylinder with a cavity in one end. As the cavity is formed, the grooves are created inside the cavity that will give rise to expansion when the bullet impacts. In the final step, the nose of the bullet is given its final shape to ensure reliable functioning in the pistol. It is fascinating to watch the

bullets going through the various stages of production and coming off the assembly line.

Speer Gold Dot bullets are loaded in the personal protection line of ammunition that the company offers, and these protection loads have already earned an enviable reputation.

■ LOAD TESTING

Although the situation has improved somewhat, Gold Dot bullets continue to be in short supply. I already had a few boxes, but by the generous assistance of Steve Moore and Brett Olin at Speer, I was able to get a wide range of Gold Dot bullets for load testing. Those that I could make use of immediately are in .380, 9mm, .38 Special, .40 S&W, and .45 auto calibers.

Bullets are available in multiple weights for each caliber except 380 Auto. However, for loading handgun ammunition, there are several powders that have a broad range of applicability. These include Alliant Unique and Power Pistol, Hodgdon Titegroup and CFE Pistol, and Winchester 231 and AutoComp.



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▲ Although the trigger leaves a lot to be desired, the SIG Sauer P2022 performed well with Gold Dot bullets, in this case the 165-grain version.

Accordingly, these propellants were selected for loads employing Gold Dot Bullets. Pistols used (with barrel lengths in parentheses) include a .380 Auto Bersa Thunder (3.5 inches), 9mm Ruger P95 (3.9 inches), .38 Special S&W Model 15 (4 inches), .40 S&W SIG Sauer 2022 (3.9 inches), and .45 Auto Ruger P345 (4.2 inches).

Seven cartridges were prepared with each load in order to provide at least five for velocity and accuracy testing and still have samples for

performance testing. Velocities were measured at 10 feet from the muzzle by means of a Competition Electronics ProChrono chronograph. Load parameters and results are shown in the accompanying table.

All loads tested performed very well. However, the 38 Special load with the 125-grain Gold Dot and 5.8 grains of AutoComp is absolute maximum for standard revolvers in that caliber. The S&W Model 14 gave good accuracy with that load,

but a factory +P load with a 125-grain bullet has an advertised velocity of 945 fps. Therefore, the load listed in the table that shows a 125-grain bullet and 5.8 grains of AutoComp should be used only in modern guns in good condition and having steel frames and cylinders.

Overall, the velocities obtained are very close to those reported in various loading manuals for comparable loads. This is not always the case. Some of the loads listed in the table showed excellent



▲ In order to expand well at low velocity, Speer markets the 135-grain Gold Dot Short Barrel version (right) compared to the 125-grain version (left) for use at higher velocities.

uniformity as illustrated by small standard deviations in velocity. Only four of the loads had a standard deviation of more than 20 fps and the other nine showed SD values in the range of 11-17 fps.

Because there are so many variables other than ammunition that affect handgun accuracy, groups were not measured. However, it became apparent from examining the targets that were shot at 25 yards that all the loads gave

accuracy that is comparable to that normally obtained with those guns. Two representative samples are shown in the accompanying photos. When I want to put bullets close together, I still reach for the S&W Model 15 because I have no handgun that is more accurate. With ammunition loaded with the 135-grain Gold Dot bullets, the S&W 15 would be devastating on varmints. **GW**



▲ With the range of calibers tested, several pistol powders were employed.

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HANDGUNS





Workman used a vintage .22 Ruger pistol to put dinner in the bag on a September hunt. Yep, the grouse was moving along the ground when he shot it. Once.

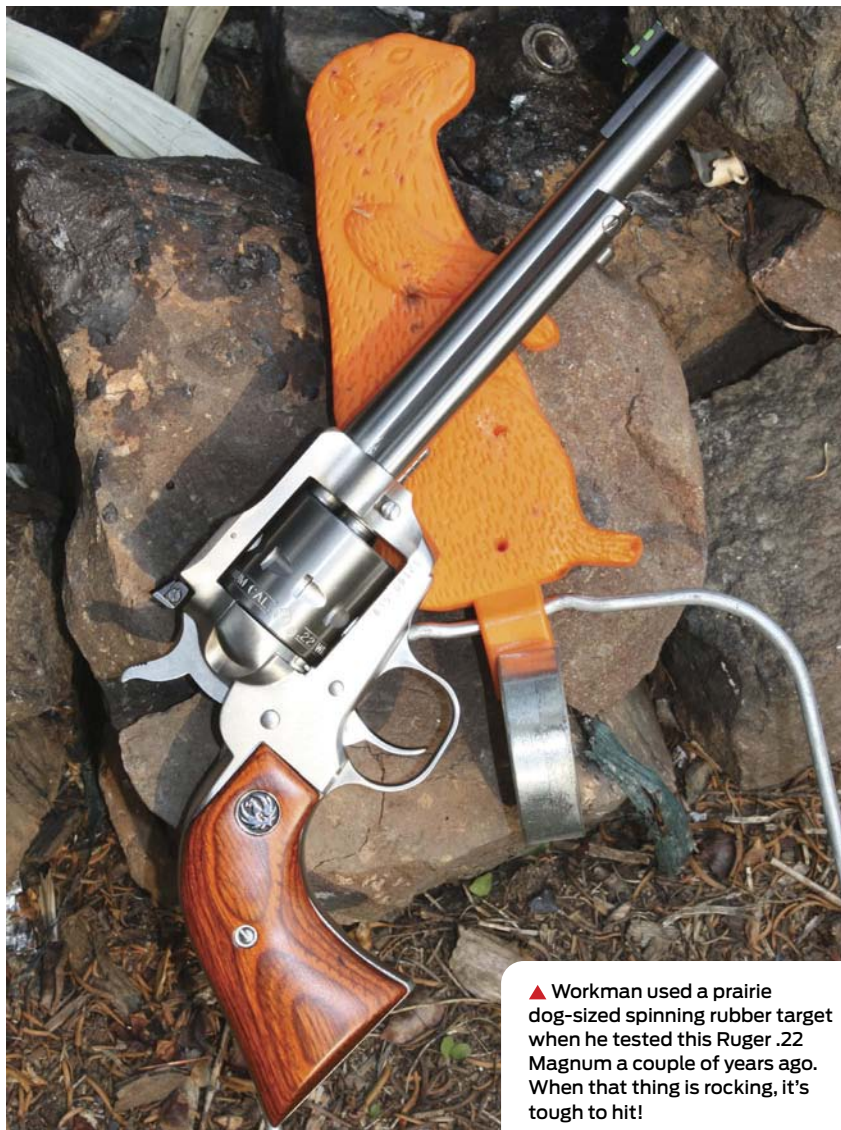
Targeted *TIME*

Text & Photos by Dave Workman

Handgunner's Advice: Practice On Small Items That Move

Despite what the 20-something, self-appointed mall ninja shooting experts tell you on their Internet blogs, there are some methods of practice that can put you ahead in the skills category, and might even provide some tasty table fare in the process.

Just because something doesn't look like a zombie or isn't made from special self-sealing, bullet-absorbing rubber that looks like a human torso and head combo, doesn't mean it's worthless as a target.



▲ Workman used a prairie dog-sized spinning rubber target when he tested this Ruger .22 Magnum a couple of years ago. When that thing is rocking, it's tough to hit!

Think tin cans, empty milk cartons or gallon jugs; items and materials readily available to anybody within driving distance of a grocery store, and don't cost you an arm and a leg. Just remember to pick up your trash before leaving the range, and don't be surprised that by the end of the day, you're a better shot and you actually had some fun.

A couple of months ago, I was accompanied on one of my normal mountain treks by a pal who—believe it or not—had never shot tin cans with serious intent. The key here is to use genuine, hard-sided tin cans, not the flimsy aluminum

beverage cans commonly littering the landscape.

My favorite target is an empty 26-ounce chili can. Hit one of these and it will move. It might bounce into the air, it might spin like a top, but it is not going to be where it was when you shot it, and that requires a shooter to keep his/her eye on the target.

A gallon milk jug makes a superb target because, as I've mentioned before in this column, it is roughly the size of a human head. If one can consistently hit a jug about midway, you're approximating what some people call the "no reflex

zone." A hit in this zone typically results in complete and immediate loss of motor reflexes.

The half-gallon carton, especially filled with water, makes a big splash when hit and it's about the size of a rabbit. The significance of this will be explained momentarily.

I also have some reactive rubber targets made by Champion that have been pictured on these pages over the years in various gun reviews. These things spin on a metal frame when hit, and they are challenging to hit while still swinging.

■ SMALL GAME

Forget for a moment we're talking defensive shooting. Let's talk about dinner. I carry some kind of sidearm all the time when I'm afield, and part of the reason is survival—or at least putting something on the table, or on a stick over some coals.

Over the years, I've shot a lot of small game with a handgun. The experience vastly improved my skill because, except on rare occasions, the critters I shot were moving. As a teen, I shot raccoons from high up spots on trees. I've shot rabbits and early in the fall, I plugged away at blue grouse walking away from a logging road high up on a ridge.

Now, if anyone thinks that ability came by shooting facsimiles of walking dead people, they're way



too devoted to television.

Some years ago, I learned that you can hit swinging targets consistently from a distance, when I had an opportunity to visit a training session with a western Washington police agency that was transitioning to Kimber semi-autos. I took along a match-grade pistol on a 1911 frame and joined a couple of the instructors for an impromptu shooting session with swinging bowling pins as the targets about 50 yards away.

When I was a kid, I shot at empty beer cans my dad had set up to see whether I understood sight alignment. I did, even at that age, and so can you or anyone willing to invest a little time.

Build a hanging target stand with 2x4s, a cross member either of wood, rebar or plastic or metal pipe. Hang tin cans, bowling pins or something else fairly solid—even pieces of dowel—that will react when hit. Mount that in front of a good backstop and go to work. With enough practice, you will soon find yourself hitting such targets with increasing regularity.

■ SKEETER'S FAULT?

Part of this fascination with shooting game with a sidearm probably comes from reading a

story by the late, great Skeeter Skelton many years ago. As I recall, Skelton was working on a road crew somewhere and it was a chilly day, and getting toward noon. Skelton related that he was carrying a .38 snubie that the boss didn't know about and spotted a jackrabbit,

which he promptly reduced to food.

They roasted the dead bunny over a small fire. The crew boss not only didn't get mad, he apparently told Skelton to repeat the feat.

Once during my teens, I hunted with a couple of guys, one of whom had an old Detective Special he let

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▲ Another target that reacts by simply breaking apart is a round clay stood on edge in a sandy bank. After they are busted, shoot at the fragments!



▲ It's fun to plink at a can with a .22, but try it with something more stout, like this Model 57 Smith & Wesson. Do this consistently and you can definitely hit something much larger.

me shoot once to see if I could hit a skunk cabbage. One round answered his curiosity, and convinced me that handguns are remarkably useful as hunting and survival tools.

Grouse taken with a pistol seem to taste a little better than ones I pop with a shotgun. I usually reserve small game work to the .22, but if a .32 H&R Magnum or something bigger is what I have, that's what I use.

My hunting pal, Brian Lull, told me about the first time he shot a grouse with a 9mm as his girlfriend—who became his wife—looked on, astonished.

All of this leads right back to the beginning, and perhaps a bit beyond. It is important, and on bad occasions, critical that anyone who carries a defensive handgun, or a sidearm in the backcountry for survival, develop the skills to hit a

moving target. Somebody intent on doing you or someone near you serious harm is not simply going to stand still and let you shoot at him. And he just might be shooting at you.

If you're stranded in the wilds, and you have a sidearm, it can be what you need for sustenance, and in the event of a confrontation with a hungry predator, self-defense. Even a .22-caliber pistol is better than no gun at all, and it has certainly paid off for me on occasion, and it can be a surprisingly lethal round if well-aimed at deer, coyotes, cougars, bobcats, wolverines or even wolves.

A colleague of mine had to shoot an aggressive dog not long ago. Like it or not, there are some dangerous dog breeds, and feral dogs have caused trouble in my home state of Washington. They don't stand still, either.

The better one is at following a target and hitting it, the more likely that learned skill will reflexively kick in at the right moment. Take the Workman challenge: Dine on some chili, rinse the cans out and take them to the range. Start plugging away; I did that recently with a .41 Magnum Model 57 Smith & Wesson, and kept the can rolling up against a sloped berm at 25 yards.

Sure, these are games, but they have a deadly serious purpose. Survival preparedness takes on many forms, not always having to do with shooting schools or other organized training shooting at human-sized targets. Impromptu targets can look harmless to others, but these little skill-improvement sessions just might make the difference, when making a difference counts. **GW**

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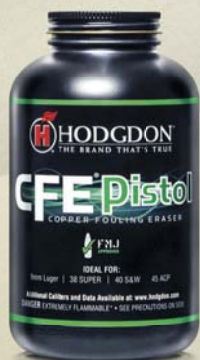
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GUNSMITHING



Here, I'm hand tapping a hole that was started with the tap guide on the drill press. Once everything is started, you want to finish by hand, because you will have a "feel" if the tap is cutting or not. If it's not cutting threads smoothly, it may be close to breaking. Here I'm tapping an 8/40 screw hole on a piece of blank aluminum scope base stock, available from Brownell's. It's good to practice on blank stock or cold rolled steel bar stock; that way, if you make a mistake and break off a drill or tap, you won't ruin an actual firearm. It takes drilling and tapping a few screw holes to get a "feel" for the procedure.

Project 1911

Text & Photos by Steve Sieberts

Part Three: Techniques Of Drilling And Tapping

One of the most common actions that a gunsmith can perform is to drill and tap a hole in either wood or metal. Each has specific tools and procedures and each can cause a lot of work for the gunsmith if done incorrectly.

Metalworking is a little more difficult in my opinion, because drilling and tapping a hole in metal can cause the drill and/or tap to break off in the material. This causes extra work to get the drill or tap out of the hole, and can sometimes ruin the material. You don't want to be tapping a hole on a \$2,000 shotgun's ventilated rib and have the drill or tap break off.

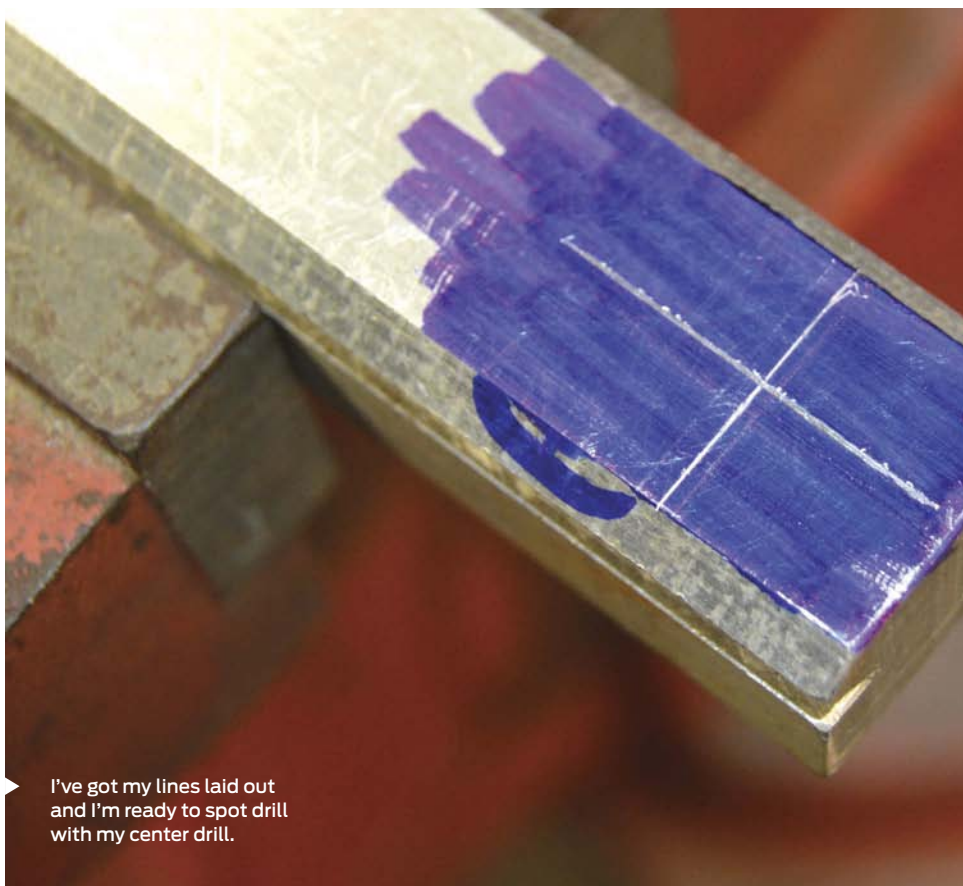


I'm using a small Starrett machinist's square to lay out my lines to locate the hole, prior to drilling. I use a blue magic Marker or Sharpie to get the color down.

Also, the varying material hardness of metal may require specialized drills and taps for best results. For example, drilling into aluminum is much easier than drilling and tapping holes in stainless steel, or especially titanium.

Even steels of the same family have different characteristics depending on what their application is. Carbon steel is very different than stainless steel, and cold-rolled steel is very different than chromoly steel. Cold-rolled steel is relatively soft and can be drilled and tapped easily; machinists would use it for prototypes since it was easy to work with. Aluminum is another good example. When I was working for the DOD, there was a machine shop in the facility that had several types of aluminum and steel round and bar stocked for various projects.

The aluminum stock was



I've got my lines laid out and I'm ready to spot drill with my center drill.

graded for hardness and tensile strength. Drilling and tapping these different grades of material was usually pretty similar, but some grades were noticeably different if the machinist was drilling and tapping very small diameter holes or very shallow holes. One grade, 1000 series aluminum, is very soft and easy to drill and tap compared to the 7000 series, which is aerospace grade.

The small drills and taps used in the gun business are easily broken if too much heat or pressure is allowed to build up during the drilling or tapping operation.

Wood can also have its challenges. Laminated wood stocks are much harder than traditional walnut stocks. The upside with wood is if you don't tap too many holes in it, the chance to break off a tap in the material is virtually nonexistent.



▲ Center drills have other uses as well. Here, I'm deburring the firing pin hole on a 1911A1 slide. Center drills are useful for deburring hard-to-reach holes like this one, but be careful, as it's easy to take off too much material. There are better tools for deburring holes, but if it's a hard-to-reach hole like this, a long, 6-inch #1 center drill like this will work.

With wood, the biggest challenge is drilling the holes without splitting the wood and pilot holes really are important in this regard.

This column will show you some of the techniques of drilling and tapping holes in both metal and wood, and also what to do if the drills or taps are broken, which, if you drill and tap enough holes, will happen eventually.

■ INFORMATION ON TAP

To drill and tap a hole, the first thing needed is information. What is the size of the screw or part for which I am trying to drill and tap a hole? Starrett makes a handy

pocket chart that shows the inch and decimal equivalents and thereby shows what drill to use for specific taps. I always have one of these handy.

For example, if I have a screw that uses 4-40 threads, I need to use #43, or a .0890 size drill to drill the clearance hole for the tap. This hole will equal the minor diameter of the screw threads with a slight clearance. The problem with this chart is that, like others in the gun business, don't always use standard drills and thread sizes. For example, most scope and base screws are with either 6-48 or 8-40, neither of which appear on the



▲ Locating the center drill down onto the work. I just want to “eyeball” the tip of the center drill down onto the crosshairs I laid out on the work. You want to make sure the work is squared up in the vise as well. I may need to put some parallel bars or a block of wood underneath the work to make sure it doesn’t move in the vise when I apply downward pressure. NOTE: The drill press is not running at this point. Always wear safety glasses, kids!

Starrett chart. But you will find 6-40 and 8-32.

So if I’m drilling a hole in metal or wood, one of the things I want to do is to drill a spot with a center drill to make sure I have the hole properly located. This will ensure that the hole I want to drill will be located exactly where I want.

Remember, drills will “walk” a little when contacting the material, and this will cause the drill to do two things: it will drill an off-center hole, or also, by “wobbling,” it will drill an oversized hole—neither of which is a good situation. Too much downward pressure on the drill press handle will also cause the drill to flex as you drill the hole, causing the drill to create an over-

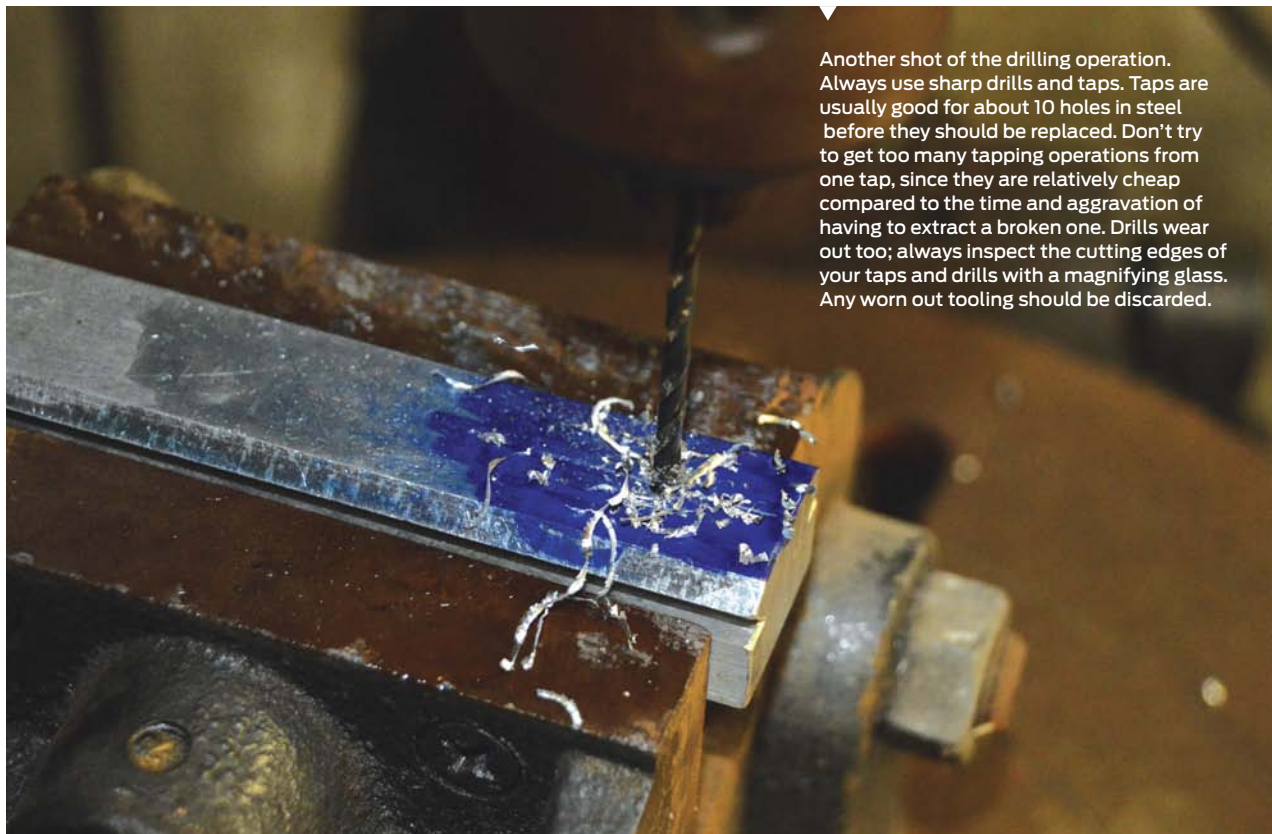
sized hole.

I can counteract this by drilling a spot with a center drill to get the drill started properly and not to use too much pressure when drilling. Too much pressure is the most common reason to break a drill or tap. Experience helps, and I had to break a few drills and taps to learn how fast or slow to go in different types of materials. Center drills are short and stout and won’t “walk” or flex when pressure is applied.

The next step is to drill a pilot hole. What is a pilot hole? It’s simply a starter hole to remove material that will make drilling the actual hole go much straighter and cleaner. I usually wouldn’t drill a pilot hole unless the finished hole I



▲ A good quality cutting oil is essential to keep the chips from clogging up the flutes on the drill or tap, and for keeping heat from building up and snapping off a drill or tap.



Another shot of the drilling operation. Always use sharp drills and taps. Taps are usually good for about 10 holes in steel before they should be replaced. Don't try to get too many tapping operations from one tap, since they are relatively cheap compared to the time and aggravation of having to extract a broken one. Drills wear out too; always inspect the cutting edges of your taps and drills with a magnifying glass. Any worn out tooling should be discarded.

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I'm using the tap guide (AKA tap follower) with the t-handle and tap to get the bottoming tap started into the hole. The tap is spring loaded, so don't use too much downward force.

needed was larger than about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Any larger than that it's usually a good idea to drill out some of the material with a pilot hole, then drill the main hole, then tap the hole. The pilot hole is normally a little under the minor diameter of the threads of the tap I want to use, and I drill the hole a little less than full depth. What is the best method to gauge how deep to drill?

■ PROPER DEPTH

One of the best ways to ensure drilling to the proper depth is by using a milling machine. This virtually ensures that the hole will be straight and true, since the head and the vise of the mill has been trued up relative to the table, and has a very precise digital readout or a depth gauge attached to the spindle of the mill that will show what the movement of the drill is doing on the "Z," or the up and down axis. Most home workshops don't have

milling machines, so we have to do this with a drill press.

To get the proper depth, use masking tape or duct tape on the drill shank to give an indicator on where to stop drilling. If I need to tap a hole that is $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch deep, drill a pilot hole three quar-

ters of the full depth. Three-eighths of an inch is .375 inches, so I would drill a pilot hole about one quarter of an inch, or .250. A drill press is not so precise, so wrap a little bit of tape on the drill to mark it as a stop. Some of the better drill presses have stops on them to keep from



drilling too deep and this will work as well.

So, I've drilled our spot with a center drill, and have drilled a pilot hole. Now I'm ready to drill the main hole. Always remember to use a good quality cutting fluid in all of these operations. Cutting fluid will help to make sure that the drill doesn't over-heat, which will cause the drill to prematurely wear. Lack of cutting fluid will also contribute to the drill or tap grabbing during drilling, breaking off in the work.

Once I've drilled the main hole with the properly sized drill, I need to tap the hole with the correct tap in order to create the threads I want.

■ TWO TAP TYPES

There are basically two types of taps: tapered and bottoming. Tapered taps are used for very deep holes, or holes that are through and through. In other words, holes that pass completely through the work.

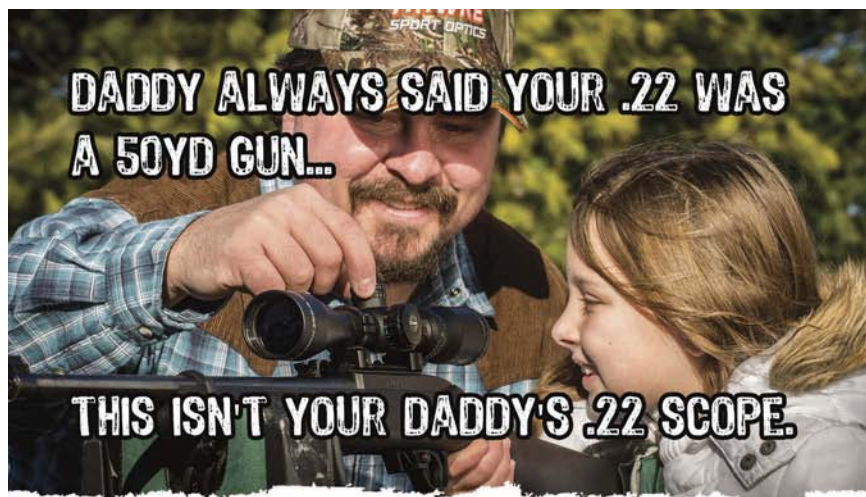


(Top) Vise grip pliers will come in handy if you break off a tap or drill and part of the drill or tap is above the work. If there's enough to grab onto, try the parallel pliers (bottom) first. If that doesn't work, use the vise grips to get a good grip on the broken piece and try to unscrew it.

Bottoming taps are used for blind holes, or holes that stop before they exit the work.

If I'm tapping a through hole, a tapered tap can be used by itself. If I'm tapping a blind hole with a bottoming tap, it's a good idea to use a tap guide to make sure the tap starts straight into the hole. Tapered taps will, because of the

taper, pretty much guide itself straight. A tap guide is simply a two-piece, spring-loaded device with a 60-degree center on the front, which is used in a drill press or milling machine to apply constant downward pressure straight down onto the tap. (See photo). This ensures the tap goes straight into the work.

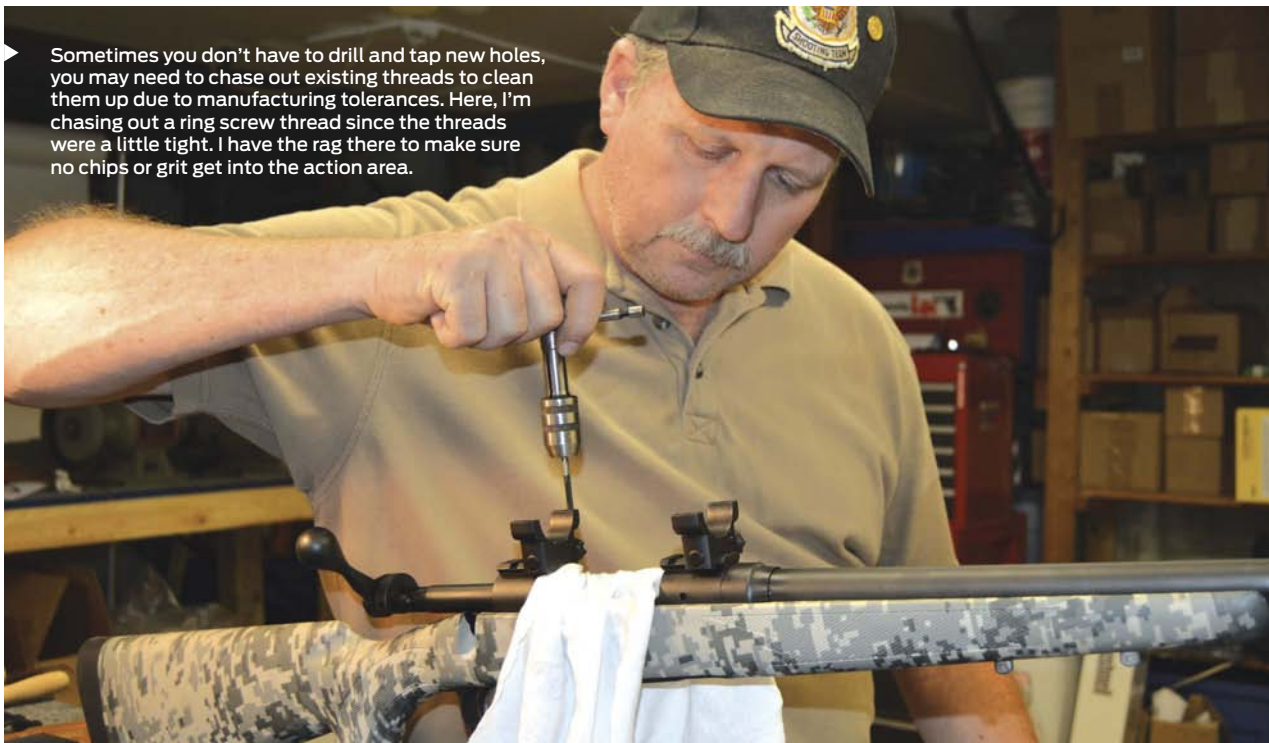


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Sometimes you don't have to drill and tap new holes, you may need to chase out existing threads to clean them up due to manufacturing tolerances. Here, I'm chasing out a ring screw thread since the threads were a little tight. I have the rag there to make sure no chips or grit get into the action area.



Tapping a hole by hand requires a little technique. Twist the tap one quarter turn into the work, and feel it cut the threads, then, reverse the tap, feeling it "bump" as starts to back out. This is where it's cutting the thread and is the technique that will produce nice, clean threads. After one or two "cuts" or "bumps," remove the tap, and use compressed air to blow out the chips, apply a little more cutting fluid, and start the tap again.

The tap will twist a little as it's cutting the thread. This is normal, but if you encounter too much resistance, you will break the tap. If this happens, the first thing to do is to not panic. If the tap breaks off flush or below flush with the work, there are a few options, either take a sharp center punch and try to shatter the tap and pull out the pieces, or you can use a tap remover. Brownell's comes to the rescue again by selling a broken tap extractor, which uses "fingers" to

extract the broken tap. Order one of these before you need it; it's cheap insurance. Another technique is to use the center punch to "unscrew" the broken tap by using the tip of the center punch and a small hammer to drive the broken piece in an unscrewing motion. One of the downsides to having a tap break off below the work and having to shatter it is that usually the threads and the hole is ruined, whereas if you use a tap extractor, the threads are usually still good to use.

If the tap is broken off above the work, use a set of parallel jaw pliers to grab the exposed shank portion of the tap and unscrew it. Parallel jaw pliers will enable you to grab the entire shank of the tap, and provide much more gripping power than regular pliers. Sometimes the tap will be really stuck, and the next step is to use vise-grip pliers.

With wood, the most common use of a drill and tap is drilling for

sling swivel studs. Again, Brownell's sells a spade drill specifically for drilling sling swivel studs. Once the hole is drilled, use the swivel stud to cut the threads. One trick is to apply a little bit of paste wax as a lubricant on the screw to cut the threads. This makes for much cleaner threads and helps prevent splitting the wood, but don't use too much wax, as the moisture will soak the wood. A little goes a long way.

Obviously, there a lot more to drilling and tapping holes in wood and metal than I've outlined here, and there is much more information available, but you definitely have enough to get started. **GW**

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Threat RESPONSE

Text & Photos by Jameson Parker

Weatherby's SA-459 TR For Home And Personal Defense Is Easy To Carry And Handle, Rugged, Reliable, And Competitively Priced.

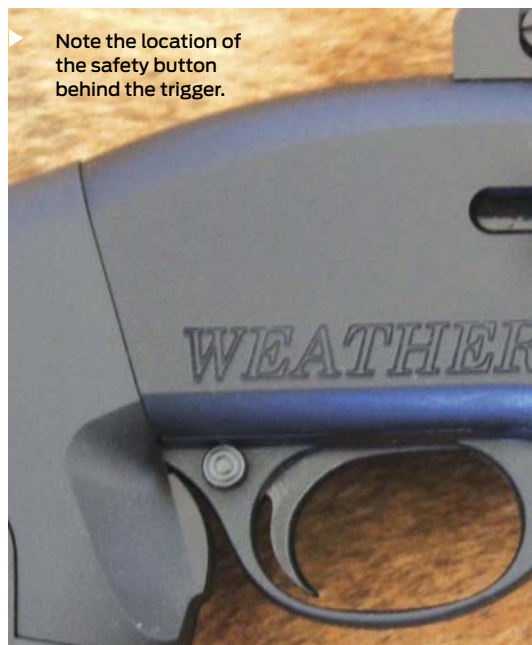
The Weatherby SA-459 TR is tough and utilitarian.



Everything, virtually everything, you have trained yourself to know and do instinctively as a life-long bird hunter, you must undo and try to forget when you take up tactical-defensive shotgun training. I went to the Gunsite Academy confident that almost 50 years of “shooting flying” would stand me in good stead. It didn’t. It was a handicap.



Adjustable rear ghost sight and Picatinny rail.



Note the location of the safety button behind the trigger.

Weatherby's sporting semi-auto, the SA-08, has an excellent reputation as a well-designed and reliable upland or waterfowl gun. (See Brad Fitzpatrick's review, Pleasant Weatherby, in the July 2014 issue.) But reliability in a sporting gun is nice; in a personal defense weapon, it is absolutely mandatory. One of the ways Weatherby ensures reliability in

You carry the gun at rest differently. You carry the gun at ready differently. You load the gun differently. You get on target differently. You even shoot the gun differently. And the gun itself is radically different.

I went to Gunsite to put Weatherby's new home defense shotguns through their paces. There are two models, a semi-auto and a pump. The semi-auto is officially named the SA-459 TR, with SA standing, obviously, for semi-auto, TR standing for threat response, and the 459 designation coming from California's Penal Code number for burglary, Weatherby being based in

Paso Robles, Calif. The pump is called the PA-459 TR.

According to the National Shooting Sports Foundation, home and personal defense has been and continues to be the fastest growing segment of the firearms market, so Weatherby's entry into that market is a logical one. If it surprises you to think of Weatherby making tactical/defensive weapons, remember that it's been offering semi-auto shotguns for hunting for more than 40 years, so it's actually a logical transition for the company.

In this issue we'll look at the semi-auto, and save the pump for later.

SPECIFICATIONS

Weatherby SA-459 TR

Gauge: 12 (tested) & 20

Chamber: 3 inches

Weight: 6.5 pounds (12 gauge)

Overall Length: 39 inches

Barrel Length: 18.5 inches

Stock: Synthetic

MSRP: \$699



both the sporting version and the Threat Response version is something it calls its dual-valve system.

All gas-operated shotguns utilize the expended gas to cycle the action and eject the spent case. Some shotguns have a gas-pressure relief valve that, in theory, allows the shotgun to digest a wide range of loads, from light target to magnum goose. The problem is that a single valve may digest a wide range, but it is not an absolute, and as I said, when it comes to personal defense, anything less is unacceptable.

Each Weatherby SA shotgun, whether sporting or Threat Response, comes with two valves, one for light loads, and one for heavy. To be precise, in 12 gauge, Weatherby recommends the "light-load valve" for loads between 7/8 ounce to 1 1/8 ounce and the "heavy-load valve" for loads between 1 1/4 ounce and 2 ounce. In 20 gauge, those ranges are reduced to 7/8 ounce for the light valve, and 7/8 ounce to 1 5/16 ounce for the heavy valve.

Changing the valves is as simple as the most rudimentary disassembly: unscrew the magazine cap, slide off the forearm, and remove the barrel. Then slip one valve off the magazine tube and put the other on. That's it.

Unfortunately, the system doesn't take absentminded writers into account.

When I first took my 12 gauge SA-459 TR gun to the range to pattern it, I decided to use up a bunch of leftover odds and ends of ammo from 20 years of hunting trips that had been gathering dust in my gun closet, old ammo my commanding officer had been urging me to "organize" (that's wife-speak for "get rid of.") In the excitement of showing off my squeaky clean gun closet to She Who Must Be Obeyed, I forgot all about the dual-valve system, and went off to the range with the light load valve in place and the heavy load valve still in the shipping container.

At the range, I realized what I had done, but I decided to go ahead and see what the 459 was made of. I had a grocery bag full of everything from low-brass to high-brass, from quail to pheasant, from turkey to Canada goose, and from skeet to some old double-aught I didn't even remember I had. In theory, I should have had a malfunction, but it wasn't even an issue. That gun digested everything with nary a hiccup. And having done that, I decided to see how far I could push that 459.

If you are as anal-obsessive, as I am, about cleaning your firearms, there is a sort of furtive,



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Gunsite instructor, Dave Hartman, puts the Weatherby SA-459 TR through its paces.

guilty pleasure in making a conscious decision to not clean, to see how long it takes to cause a malfunction. I'm still waiting, so chalk one up for Weatherby.

The SA-459 action is made from matte black CNC-machined, aircraft-grade 7075 T6 alloy to both reduce weight and improve handling while providing rugged strength and durability. It has a Picatinny mil-spec rail system on top of the receiver, allowing you to accessorize to your heart's content. It also has an oversized hourglass bolt handle that is easy to locate and operate under pressure, which is, of course, how a defensive weapon is likely to be used.

The barrel is 18 1/2 inches for use at close quarters, chrome lined, and comes with a removable, extended and ported choke tube in cylinder, for a total barrel length of 20 inches.

About that cylinder choke: I'm honestly not sure why Weatherby offers a removable choke tube in a defensive/tactical firearm intended for the civilian market. Gunsite teaches that there are three zones for defensive shotgun use. In zone A, you are so close to the target that

your shot pattern consists, essentially, of a single load. In zone B, your pattern is optimal. In zone C, keeping in mind that shot pattern expands at a rate of 1 inch per yard, your pattern opens up too much to be effective. Any choke tighter than a cylinder would give you an optimum pattern at a greater distance, but it would also put you at a distance where, in our litigious world, the police might react skeptically to any claims of self-defense.

The 13 1/2 -inch stock is black, synthetic, and has a pistol grip to allow you to secure the gun tightly against your shoulder while reloading. A defensive weapon should never be taken off target if at all possible, and a lot of time at Gunsite was devoted to practicing tactical reloads while on target. The pistol grip also makes the shotgun easier to aim.

And aim is the operative word with a tactical/defensive shotgun. Weatherby's SA-459 TR comes with an adjustable rear ghost-ring sight and a fiber optic front blade sight. I am a big fan of fiber optic sights for defensive weapons. I know from personal experience that when confronted by a bad guy

with a gun, there is a marked tendency to focus on that gun and nothing else. I mentioned this once to a famous defensive pistol shooting instructor, himself a survivor of more than one shootout, and he told me that training yourself to keep your eye on the front sight will help you control your fear in an actual defensive situation; by focusing on the sight, you're not letting yourself be distracted by looking at the bad guy's gun, and that helps you control your fear. Fiber optic sights help you do just that.

Another well thought out item is the safety, conveniently located at the base of the trigger guard so that your finger is in constant proximity to the trigger.

“Reliability in a sporting gun is nice; in a personal defense weapon, it is absolutely mandatory.”

With swivel studs for a sling, and weighing only 6 1/2 pounds (six, in 20 gauge) the SA-459 TR is easy to carry and handle, rugged, reliable, and—at \$699—competitively priced. Remove the mandatory plug and it will hold five 2 3/4-inch shells or four 3-inch shells. If a shotgun is your choice for home and personal defense, I would recommend you take a serious look at Weatherby's entry into that field. **GW**

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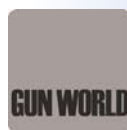
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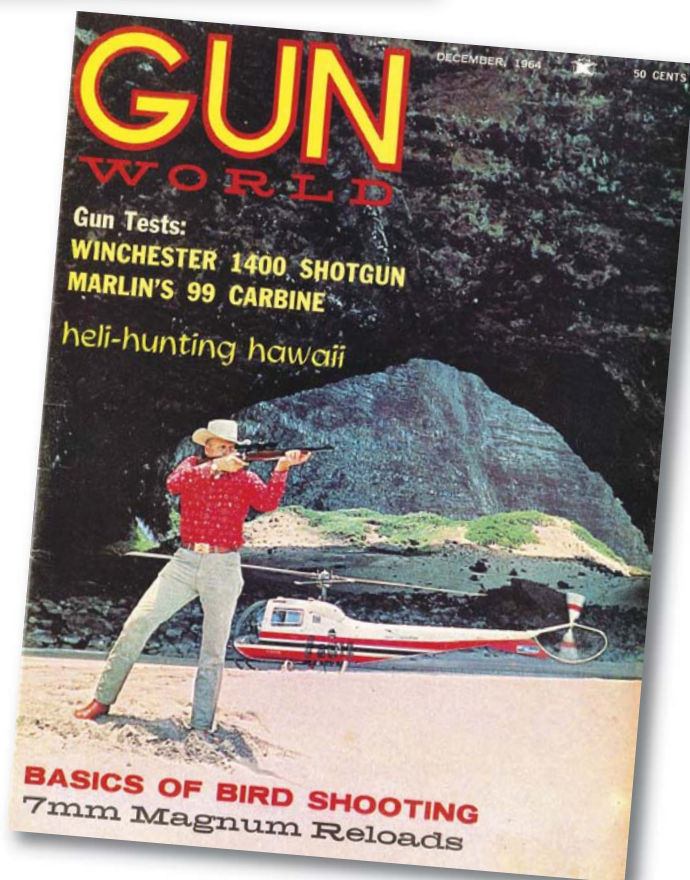
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▲ Jack Lewis—*Gun World*'s founder, publisher and editorial director—graced our December 1964 cover holding a Remington Model 600 carbine topped by a Bushnell Banner 4X scope. Lewis had been airlifted to an otherwise inaccessible beach along Hawaii's Na Pali coast in search of wild goats.

HELI-HUNTING HAWAII

By Craig Hodgkins

These days, helicopter-aided hunting—especially for feral hogs—has become something of a cottage industry, but that wasn't always the case. *Gun World* publisher, Jack Lewis, took part in an early heli-hunt in Hawaii, and although Lewis returned to the states without a trophy, he did so with his sense of humor intact.

The idea grew out of a conversation between Lewis and Paul

Shaner, who had recently returned from Kauai, where he had served as technical advisor on the motion picture *None But the Brave*, directed by and starring Frank Sinatra.

"Over lunch," the article stated, "Shaner had told of his adventures on the film, then happened to mention an outfit called Kauai Helicopters and how Clint Walker, another star of the picture ... had been airlifted into the interior of the island's rugged mountains so (he) could go hunting."

Lewis was intrigued, and set out to schedule a trip of his own to go after the mountain goats and wild boar which inhabited the inaccessible cliffs along the island's

rugged coastline. He selected a Remington Model 600 because he felt it would be ideal for carrying in the tight confines of a helicopter and for getting in and out of the small door.

Once on the island, Lewis obtained the non-resident license necessary for hunting on public lands, and cleared the hunt with the local Fish and Game Commission authorities. Photographer Paul Seaman, of the Hawaii Visitors Bureau, accompanied Lewis, and Kauai Helicopters owner/pilot Jack Harter got them both in the air and off to a wide, flat canyon hidden between steep cliffs.

“Lewis was intrigued, and set out to schedule a trip of his own...”

"Swinging in over razor-like peaks of black lava, Harter flushed game; several herds of the wild goats ran pack-like at the sound of the engine ... He throttled down and auto-rotated the ship to a landing."

After walking uphill through the humidity for several hundred yards, Lewis picked out one of the goats.

"Raising the rifle to what amounted to an angle of more than 60 degrees, he sighted in on the goat, then raised his aim by several feet more and fired. The bullet spanged off the rocks a foot above the goat and frightened it as well as several others. They began to crowd each other on the ledge.

"Lewis turned to his companions and asked, 'You suppose if one of the damned things falls off, I can claim a hit?'" **GW**

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